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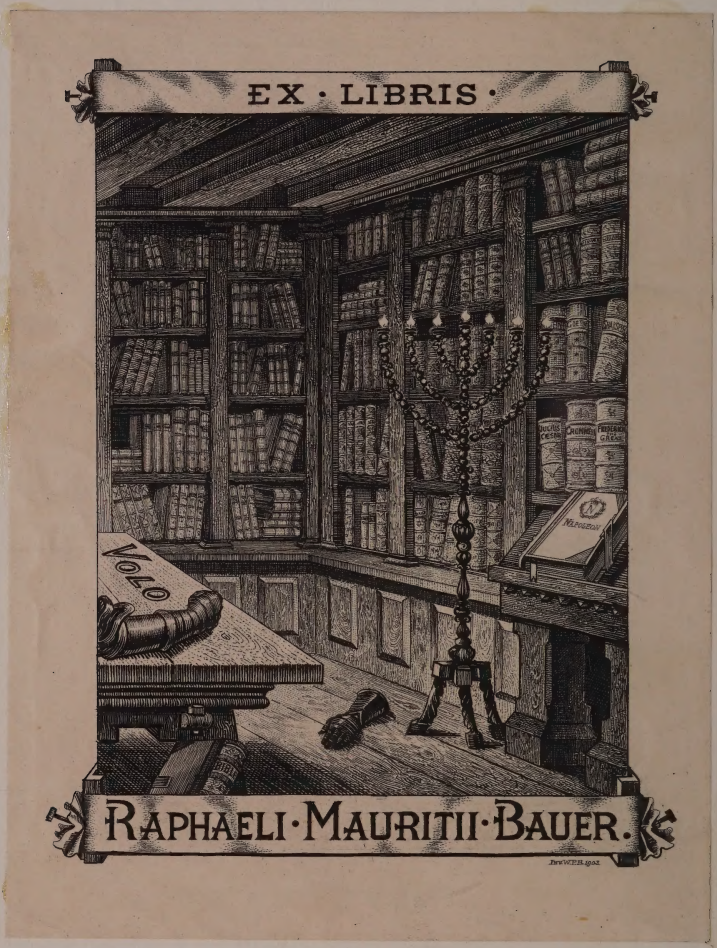

Mrs F M Bauer
from
John Lynn

Christmas
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The titlepage in "Walden" appears in two states in Vol. I. The first is from an *engraving* on copper by Mr. Hopson, who designed the page, and the second (on parchment) is from an *etching* on copper by Mr. Bicknell,—omitting the little accessories inside the lines around the border. The two prints afford an interesting comparison of the work of the engraver with that of the etcher.

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WALDEN

OR

LIFE IN THE WOODS

VOLUME I

WALDEN
EXIMIUM OPUS
EXIMIE ORNETUR
THE·BIBLIOPHILE·SOCIETY
INCORPORATED 1901
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A BIOGRAPHICAL INDEX WILL BE FOUND AT THE CONCLUSION OF VOLUME II

THE COUNCIL CERTIFIES THAT FOUR HUNDRED AND SIXTY-ONE COPIES OF THIS WORK ON HOLLAND HANDMADE PAPER AND NINE COPIES ON JAPANESE VELLUM HAVE BEEN PRINTED FOR MEMBERS; ALSO TEN COMPLIMENTARY COPIES FOR MR. BIXBY, TWO FOR COPYRIGHT, AND ONE COMPLIMENTARY COPY FOR MR. SANBORN, THE EDITOR

TRANSFERRED FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Walden,

or

Life in the Woods.

By

Henry D. Thoreau;

Author of "A week on the Concord & Merrimack Rivers"

I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up. p.

"The clouds, wind, moon, sun, and sky, act in cooperation, that thou mayest get thy daily bread, and not eat it with indifference; all revolve for thy sake, and are obedient to command; it must be an equitable condition, that thou shalt be obedient also." Sadi.

(OVER)

On the reverse hereof is Thoreau's titlepage to the *Walden* MS., with his crude sketch of Chanticleer. The "Author of *A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers*" and the quotation from Sadi were omitted from the printed editions: —

WALDEN

OR

LIFE IN THE WOODS

BY

HENRY D. THOREAU

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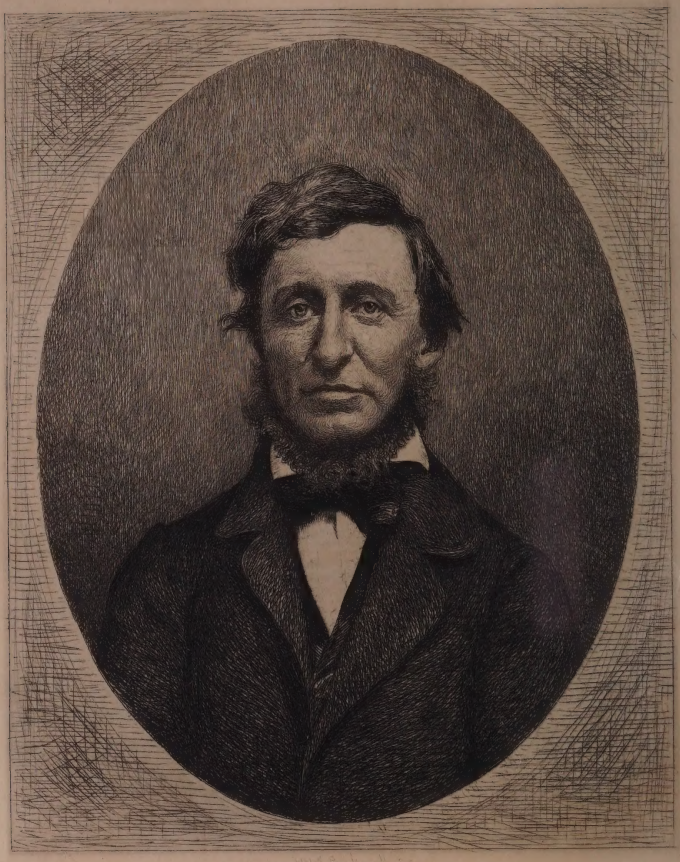
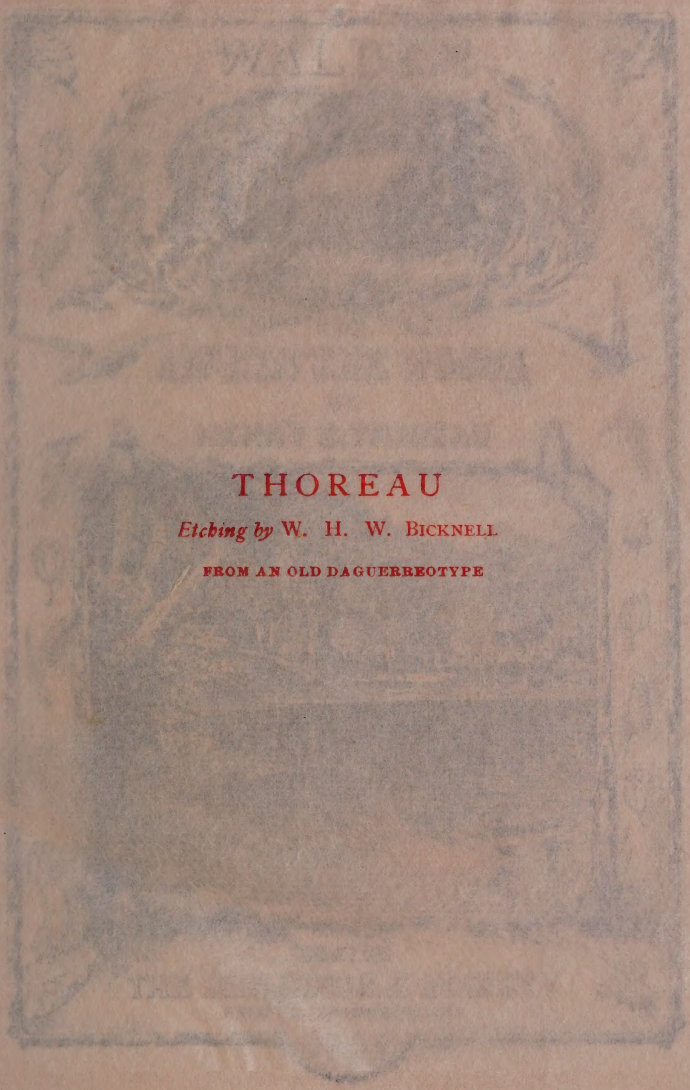
— SADI.





THOREAU

Etching by W. H. W. BICKNELL

FROM AN OLD DAGUERREOTYPE

THOREAU
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BY

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BOSTON
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1909

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LIFE IN THE WOODS

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PRINTED FOR MEMBERS ONLY

1909

Their piles of golden ore let others heap,
And hold their countless roods of cultured soil;
Whom neighboring foes in constant terror keep, —
The weary victims of unceasing toil.

ALBIUS TIBULLUS

PREFATORY REMARKS

BY HENRY H. HARPER

THOREAU needs no introduction to the literary world. His works are now more highly prized, both in this country and in Europe, than ever before, and in bringing out a new edition of *Walden*, his greatest and most personal work, no apology would be necessary, even though it were only a reprint of existing editions. Readers will be astonished to learn, however, that the original MS. of *Walden*, which has but recently come to light, contains upwards of twelve thousand words omitted from the printed editions. It has commonly been supposed that the original MS. was destroyed by the publishers of the first edition at Boston in 1854, and it was not known until lately that Thoreau retained the original draft in his possession. After its discovery among a mass of papers left by Thoreau in an old chest, it passed directly into the hands of Mr. Bixby, who with characteristic generosity turned it over to The Bibliophile Society to print for the members. The authenticity of the MS. is unquestioned, as it is entirely in the author's handwriting.

At the time *Walden* was first printed, Thoreau was unknown to fame, and the publishers may have "cut" his MS. deliberately, in order to get

it into one convenient-sized volume. Whether or not the MS. furnished them was destroyed for the purpose of preventing the author, or future generations, from later comparing and discovering the omissions is left to conjecture. Although the proof-pages were sent to Thoreau to read, it is doubtful if he either compared them with his own MS. or noticed the omissions. Even if he did, he was perhaps no less anxious than the publishers to keep down the cost of composition, for he had lost a considerable sum on his first publishing venture, *The Week*.

It has not been deemed advisable to interrupt the harmony of the pages by indicating specifically, through the introduction of a different style of type, the words and passages restored from the MS. It is sufficient to say that in order to make a copy of the previously printed edition conform to the text of the original MS. it was necessary to make changes in nearly three hundred pages, and in some places the restored parts extend to from one to four pages. The facsimile page here inserted indicates the corrections and additions made on a single page, which, with the new matter added from the MS., has been expanded into three pages. See pp. 151–3. Surely no further evidence is needed to illustrate the necessity for a new and authoritative text of this important work.

In a few instances omitted or changed parts have been subjoined in footnotes, either because they would seem to disturb the continuity of the text (which is perhaps one reason why they were originally left out), or for the reason that they

I did not read books the first summer; I hoed beans. Nay, I often did better than this. There were times when I could not afford to sacrifice the bloom of the present moment to any work, whether of the head or hands. I love a broad margin to my life. Sometimes, in a ~~summer~~ morning, ~~having taken my accustomed bath,~~ I sat in my sunny doorway from ~~sunrise~~ till noon, rapt in a revery, amidst the pines and hickories and sumachs, in undisturbed solitude and stillness, while the birds sang around ~~or~~ and flitted noiseless through the house, until by the sun falling in at my west window, or the noise of some traveller's wagon on the distant highway, I was reminded of the lapse of time. I grew in those ~~seasons like~~ corn grows in the night, and they were far better than any work of ~~the~~ my hands ~~would have been~~. They were not time subtracted from my life, but so much over and above my usual allowance. I realized what the Orientals mean by contemplation and the forsaking of works. For the most part, I minded not how the hours went. The day advanced as if to light some work of mine; it was morning, and lo, now it is evening, and nothing memorable is accomplished. Instead of

earliest dawn

over my head, and out at the open window; otherwise in undisturbed solitude and stillness, except, perchance, when a bough fell to the ground broken by its own weight in my sumach*

spring when the season of work had not yet arrived, or later, in the summer, when it was already past, having performed my accustomed oblations, as/ intervals/ t/ philosophers/

"Insert" contains additional omitted matter.

See insert attached "A"

I

ie/

ly/

s/ rays/

I am sensible that I waxed and

indeed,

See insert "C"

see insert "B" attached

insert "D" attached

Printer: Poetry in insert "D" to be in smaller type. — H.H.H.

* grove, - when the atmosphere was filled with perfume, and every sound the key to unheard harmonies.

ERRATA

The references on pp. x and xi to the text of pp. 151–3 should read pp. 149–151

were printed in a changed form. An example of this kind is to be found at pp. 207, 8, in Vol. I. Small capitals and italics are used at pp. 151–3 in this volume to indicate changes and additions, and to show the difference between the original and the new printed texts. None of the numerous other corrections and additions are specially noted, except where they occasionally appear in the footnotes. Every change from the printed text has been carefully verified by Mr. Sanborn, after having gone over the entire MS. line by line for purposes of comparison. He has also written an introduction and furnished a great number of explanatory notes containing desirable information drawn from personal reminiscences of Thoreau, which no other person now living could supply.

It should be observed that Thoreau, although he said he was not a hermit by nature, took naturally to the solitude and ruralness of his wooded surroundings at Walden Pond. After graduating from Harvard he tried teaching, but that was not to his liking, so he turned his attention to experimenting in economic living. It was his custom to get at the bottom, or original source, of things that interested him, and it may be said that he reduced the problem of expense to its simplest form when for eight months' rations he spent only $8.74. The two largest items in his tabulated list of expense were rice and molasses, and once he paid two cents for a watermelon. The sum and substance of the whole matter is thus concisely stated by Thoreau himself: —

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or throw it in the teeth of him that made it, as it were; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it."

It therefore seems clear that before going to the woods Thoreau had a definite purpose in mind, and that purpose was to publish a treatise on the economy, simplicity and contentment of the "simple life," giving account of such experiences as it actually yielded to him. He preferred to write from knowledge gained by actual contact rather than from untried theory. The reader must not, however, take him too seriously in all that he says, for he was no less a humorist than a philosopher.

Thoreau's writings are peculiarly suited to all classes; they are alike instructive and entertaining: to the poorer class because he proves conclusively what comfort, and even happiness, may be enjoyed with the minimum of effort and ex-

pense; and to the opulent they satisfy an important desideratum in the form of the most wholesome entertainment. *Walden* has been described as "a book for those who love books, for those who love Nature, for those who love courageous thinking, courageous acting, and all sturdy, manly virtues; a book to be read through; a book, also, to be read in parts, as one uses a manual of devotion; a tonic book in the truest sense; a book against meanness, conformity, timidity, discouragement, unbelief; a book easily conceived of as marking an era in a reader's life; a book for the individual soul against the world."

In publishing *Walden,* Thoreau has given to the world a true account of the most important events of his life, to which little need be added, apart from comment. Every side of his peculiar and interesting character is plainly reflected in its pages. His life appears to have been comparatively free from thrilling events, and Cupid's virus seems not to have been deeply inoculated into his veins. His fondness for Nature appears to have dwarfed all other attachments. For the most part he wrote, as he lived, with simple directness and fearless energy. It mattered not to him if his mode of life and style of writing did not please his neighbors. He was living and writing for a larger audience. He had accomplished his purpose of "driving life into a corner" and reducing it to its simplest form, and after publishing the results of his analysis the world could take them or leave them, just as it liked.

Human nature has really changed but little in

the past two thousand years, for we find Horace, Tibullus and other poets of their time raving over the beauties of the simple country life, free from the turmoil of the city with its perplexing trials and worries. The rural bachelor life of Thoreau at Walden differed but little from the solitary existence of Horace at his Sabine Farm, which has been the Mecca of travellers for upwards of a thousand years. This free-from-care, out-of-door life has always been a happy and fruitful theme for poets, — one of which readers never tire. It is a beautiful aspiration which in the lives of most people is never dispelled by actual participation; hence its enjoyment is perennial.

Perhaps the chief difference between Horace and Thoreau was, that while the former was a master of metre, the latter, though possessing a poetical mind, usually got into difficulties with his measures when he attempted to express his thoughts in verse. However, Mr. Sanborn thinks that most of his bad verse is due to a peculiar ambition to differentiate from other poets, rather than to a lack of knowledge of poetic rhythm. If this be true, he must have felt conscious of having attained the summit of his purpose when he wrote the following lines to Walden Pond, — omitted in the printed editions: —

It 's a part of me
Which I have not profaned.
I live by the shore of me detained.
Laden with my dregs,
I stand on my legs,
While all my pure wine
I to Nature consign.

His intimate friend Channing appropriately styled him the "Poet-Naturalist," which seems eminently more fitting than it would be to call him a Natural-Poet. In at least one place Thoreau laments that he fears he has "not obtained to obscurity;" but this fear may have been expressed early in his career as a writer. Surely some of his paradoxes are sufficiently obscure, especially in the Economy chapter. He was, however, considerate enough to confine his writings mostly to prose, and so long as he treats of familiar objects and topics his style is generally lucid, smooth and entertaining.

It may seem strange that in all of Thoreau's writings he seldom refers to the gentler sex. He was not of the *beau idéal* type and was perhaps as much let alone by women as they were let alone by him; although Mr. Sanborn says that he had a love-affair in early life, and is said to have gallantly given way to another suitor. However, he offers no word of solace to unfavored beaux, and no apology for his persistent state of bachelorhood. On the other hand, Horace — with whom Nature was none too generous in bestowing her gifts of figure and grace — devoted many of his best lyrical compositions to the seductive charms of the fairer sex. He paid his respects to Chloe, Pyrrha, Lydia, Barine, Asteria, Lyce, and others. He had many heart-to-heart talks with his lovelorn friends, and gave a timely word of warning to the unsophisticated youth against the wiles and snares of the golden-haired Pyrrha, into whose irresistible toils he confesses himself to

have been once beguiled. But never again! he says.

The writings of Horace would indicate that he was less of a naturalist than Thoreau, although at heart he was probably more devoted to the simple country life, for he remained at his Sabine Farm until death; whereas, although Thoreau discourses at great length upon the delights of a close intimacy with Nature, it is observable that he partook of these rural pleasures with moderation; for he spent but little more than two years in the woods, during which time he made frequent visits to the village; and it is perhaps not to be doubted that upon these occasions he was quite neighborly with his mother's pantry. In one of the footnotes Mr. Sanborn says that he frequently sat with Thoreau at his mother's table, where he ate and drank with relish whatever was set before him, — even tea and coffee, which he appears to have scorned at his hermitage. And after two years at Walden he was satisfied to return to what he terms "civilized life," where he remained permanently thereafter. While it is unquestionably true that the simple and independent modes of the rural life of which he wrote have certain distant attractions for many persons, it is none the less a fact that most of us are quite content to enjoy only their mirrored reflections in books amid more comfortable and luxurious surroundings in a populous and civilized community.

I well remember that upon first reading *Walden* I was seized with an irrepressible desire to visit the lake and vicinity that Thoreau immortalized;

but a visit to the place later dispelled many of the visions with which the author had stored my imagination. It seemed so bleak and commonplace that I was obliged to re-read the book in order to regain the good impression I had formed. It does not follow that Thoreau's descriptions were overdrawn at the time, — but countless changes have taken place since then. Many beautiful dreams thus find a rude awakening in their actual realization, and even the fond delights in childhood retrospection which are wont to linger with us through life become as a shattered mirror when we attempt to turn back and realize them again. —

> When thoughts revert to memories dear,
> To days of yore when love was young,
> Content thyself to let them sleep
> Amid the sweets in dreamland's realm;
> For shades of night have hallowed them,
> And when revealed to noontide's rays
> Of later years and newer ways,
> They 'll fade and die before thy gaze.
>
> (H. H. H.)

Among the features that stand forth prominently in Thoreau's writings are, his matchless power of description — for he could discourse entertainingly upon the least attractive object, or the most empty subject — and his capacity for making the best of conditions as he found them in life. He makes the drudgery of hoeing beans in the hot sun appear as a pleasing pastime that would excite the envy of a gentleman of leisure; and for this alone he commands my undying admiration. I am conscious that when a young-

ster of ten or twelve years I missed a great deal by not being able to view this sport as Thoreau did.

When Thoreau tells how sumptuously he dined on corn meal moistened with pond water and baked on a pine shingle before the fire out of doors, with salt and molasses as the only condiments, while the envious birds and squirrels twittered and clamored overhead in the surrounding trees, he makes the elaborate *menu* of a Palm Beach winter hotel appear vulgar and uninviting by comparison. The glare of the modern stage, with its dazzling lights and dancing girls, seems dull and stupid as compared with the joy and contentment of sitting on the door-step silently and alone on a dark night in the wilderness listening to the weird medley of frogs, owls, whippoorwills and other "nightly visitors," all chanting, hooting and screeching in discordant unison, accompanied by the sighing and creaking of the tree-tops as they rocked to and fro in the breeze. After describing these nightly serenaders, he says: "Though it is now dark, the wind still blows and roars in the woods, and the waves still dash, and some creatures lull the rest with their notes. The repose is never complete." And when Thoreau elaborates upon the unalloyed beauties of Walden Pond in winter, covered with its sheet of ice and blanket of snow, one is strongly tempted to forsake the cosey steam-heated quarters of a modern apartment hotel to journey with him through the snowdrifts amid the wildness of Nature.

Though there is much of an impracticable sort

in the logic and sayings of this hermit philosopher, there is nevertheless much to be drawn from his philosophy of life. Contentment is perhaps one of the most essential elements of happiness, and we find the impress of this upon most of Thoreau's utterances. While at work in the bean-field he would alleviate all discomforts of the job by indulging his thoughts in the beauties of Nature about him and pitying others engaged in less agreeable pursuits. Then at the turn of the row, there was the shrub-oak copse, where he could rest in the shade; while at the other end, in lieu of the shade there were the green black-berries "deepening their tints" as he "paced slowly backward and forward" between the rows. Everything partook of a sunny hue, — even the tinkling of his hoe against the stones brought forth sweet music which was wafted away in the still, open air. "Simplicity! simplicity!! simplicity!!!" he says, — to which we might well echo "Contentment! contentment!! contentment!!!"

We cannot all go to the woods to live with Thoreau, surrounded by the peaceful serenity of Nature, but we can at least profit by the lesson he teaches. He appears to have taken life in a calm, temperate way, as it came to him, and while the demands upon his mental, physical and financial resources were less than those made upon the average individual of today — or even in his own time — there is much in his theories that may be advantageously applied to other more exacting and eventful careers. When continued rain kept him in the house from hoeing his beans, he did not worry himself ill by thinking of the weeds

that were growing up to smother them. — "Though it prevents my hoeing them, it is of far more worth than my hoeing," he soliloquizes. — "If it should continue so long as to cause the seeds to rot in the ground, and destroy the potatoes in the lowlands, it would still be good for the grass in the uplands; and being good for the grass, it would be good for me." The pattering of the rain on his shingles was music to his ear, and as he sat alone in his sparsely furnished hut he consoled himself with the satisfying thought that he did not occupy a spacious house in the village, furnished with costly rugs, requiring a maid at the door with mop and pail to prevent the water from running in and destroying the furnishings.

He was never quite alone, day or night; for the pond, the trees, birds, squirrels, and his bean rows kept him company in the daytime, while at night the owls, whippoorwills, foxes, frogs, mice and even the wasps which swarmed in his house — frequently in his bed, as he says — at certain seasons, serenaded him at night. They all were regarded as his friends and companions. Of his beans, he says, — "I came to love my rows, my beans, though so many more than I wanted. They attached me to the earth, and so I got strength, like Antæus." His only enemies were "worms, cool days, and most of all, woodchucks;" for all of these interfered with his beans; hence his enmity. He even had a sympathetic word for the weeds which he felt obliged to oust from his bean rows. He said that "every little pine needle expanded and swelled

with sympathy" for him. And thus he drew inspiration and companionship from every creature and object around him.

He says that he was "no more lonely than the loon in the pond, or than Walden Pond itself; or than a single mullein or dandelion in a pasture; or a bean leaf, or sorrel, or horse-fly, or a humble-bee. I am no more lonely than the Mill Brook, or a weathercock, or the north star, or the south wind, or an April shower, or a January thaw, or the first spider in a new house."

Though a professed lover of solitude, Thoreau had an agreeable and neighborly disposition. His circle of friends was restricted, but he took much pleasure in the friendly calls of those who occasionally visited his lonely retreat, and, strangely enough, he devoted two chapters in *Walden* to "Visitors" and "Winter Visitors." He said, "I think that I love society as much as most, and am ready to fasten myself like a bloodsucker for the time to any full-blooded man that comes in my way." But he never forgave the two strange women visitors who borrowed his dipper — avowedly to get a drink — and threw it into the pond. He had an old-fashioned house-raising, "rather to improve so good an occasion for neighborliness than from any necessity." Incidentally, it is to be regretted that the time-honored custom of having "house-raisings," "log-rollings," "husking-bees," "apple-parings," "quiltings," and other neighborhood "affairs," all so productive of jovialness and good-fellowship, have of late years been so much neglected.

I personally should like Thoreau better if he

had refrained from tiresome digression upon laborious and hypothetical questions. So long as he confines himself to narrative and facts near home — as he generally does in *Walden* — he is delightfully entertaining and instructive; but his frequent indulgence of his fondness for paradox is naturally puzzling to the reader. He had many peculiar and quixotic ideas, — which if printed disconnectedly might well occasion anxiety for the author's sanity, — but after stumbling a little in getting over these rough places, when we return with him to his Walden resort and listen to his narrative of the life and scenery there, depicted in his simple, yet inimitable, style we at once forgive and forget his eccentricities. For instance, what could be more delicious than his description of the surroundings of his little cabin, to be found at the beginning of Chapter IV! He speaks of the sand-cherry which "adorned the sides of the path with its delicate flowers arranged in umbels cylindrically about its short stems, which last, in the fall, weighed down with good-sized and handsome cherries, fell over in wreaths like rays on every side." He says he tasted them "merely out of compliment to Nature." Even the homeliest ragweed becomes a beautiful flower under the touch of his magic wand. And when further along he describes Walden Pond in summer, with its "crystalline purity," — the "distiller of celestial dews," its placid bosom surrounded by a natural fringe of foliage which hung in clusters and festoons over its borders, one is almost resistlessly impelled to go and take a plunge in this sacred pool, were

it not for committing sacrilege, in thus profaning it.

In most books we encounter more or less abstruse matter, or chaff, or padding, but on the whole, probably Thoreau's *Walden* is freer from these common faults than the average of the recognized classics, among which this work is destined to hold a merited place in the front ranks through ages to come.

INTRODUCTION

TO THE NEW AND UNABRIDGED EDITION OF WALDEN

When Mr. E. H. Russell, of Worcester, inherited from his intimate friend, Mr. Harrison Blake, the Journals and other manuscripts of Thoreau, which Mr. Blake had received from Miss Sophia Thoreau at some time prior to her death in 1876, he held them for some years, with the hope of editing them himself, as Mr. Blake had partially done. Finding this hope not likely to be realized, he began to dispose of the MSS. by gift and by sale; and one of his first sales was of a large bulk of manuscript sheets, which apparently had not been very carefully examined either by Miss Thoreau or by Mr. Blake, but remained much as they were packed together in a large box by Thoreau himself. They included many pages torn from the original Journals, and others re-written from the Journals which in some form or other went into the two volumes published by the author in his lifetime. There were also many pages evidently intended for those volumes, or for the accounts of Canada and Cape Cod, and the Maine Woods, which did not get into those volumes, or into the magazine articles that preceded the posthumous publication of the books themselves.

The largest single collection of these sheets, whether brought together by Thoreau himself or by some one of his posthumous editors (Emerson, Sophia Thoreau, Ellery Channing, and Harrison Blake), was of material evidently intended for the *Walden* volume, — oftentimes in more than one draft, and all in Thoreau's handwriting, — but very differently arranged from that form given the book at the time of its publication in 1854. Passages that then appeared in the earlier chapters were in the MSS. assigned to a much later position, and *vice versa;* and there was no systematic division into chapters. Some of the sheets were evidently the beginning or the continuation of lectures in which he had given, before audiences at Concord or elsewhere, portions of his story of *Life in the Woods,* which, whether as lectures or in the volume, was at once attractive. When in February, 1849, Hawthorne wrote to him for a second or third lecture at the Salem Lyceum, he suggested as a topic, "a continuation of the Walden experiment," — showing that one of Thoreau's Salem lectures had been about his life by the lake. There was also a blending to some extent of the MSS. for *The Week* with those for *Walden;* and an introduction here and there of verses which were but sparingly admitted into the printed volume, though given in full in the sheets. Altogether, the omitted passages would have made between sixty and eighty additional printed pages. Probably one reason for their omission was the wish of the publishers not to have the volume of 1854 any longer than the 357 pages which it included.

Other omissions were the result of re-writing, or advice from others, or of a wish to exclude personalities, dates, etc. Oftentimes no reason can be assigned for the omissions; and it sometimes happened that the omitted form was better, both in style and thought, than the printed one. The remarkable thing was that the author, in this, as in other writings, should have carefully cherished and preserved the original and the amended forms, — sometimes to the number of four or five separate drafts. This must have been his own act, and is in contrast with the complete destruction by him of many of his earlier manuscripts.

I have gone carefully over the entire collection, and have assigned the various parts to their proper places in the original *Walden* work, so far as this could be determined. To this remark, however, there are some unimportant and one or two serious exceptions. The last relate to the order of the early chapters, which, as Mr. Fortescue says of the *Memoirs* of Thibaudeau, a faithful chronicler of Bonaparte's sayings and doings, " in the original seem to be thrown together quite irrespective of chronology." Thus I have made Thoreau's Second Chapter the First, and have replaced in the First those parts of the immoderately long chapter on " Economy " with which all the former editions open. Some parts of the eighty-eight pages of " Economy " have also been transferred to later chapters, in which they find a more fitting place. In this way the length of the eighteen chapters has been more equalized, and the connection of topics made more evident.

Those who read the fourteen volumes of Thoreau's Journals, as now printed and issued by his liberal and exact Boston publishers, will see that their author did not much regard the sequence of thought, or the connection of topics, in making his Journal entries, — a fact rather noticeable, because in most cases the Journals were deliberately written up from original notes, at some time, — often months, and even years after the fact or sentiment was first noted. Thus the description of the battle of the ants in Chapter XII was not entered in the extant Journal until January, 1852, although the fight occurred in the summer of 1845, as he indicates by saying it was " in the Presidency of Polk, five years before the passage of Webster's Fugitive-Slave-Bill."

A space of more than six years had intervened between the entry at Walden in his note-book, and the final pages in the Journal for January 21, 1852. At that date Thoreau had been absent from his Walden cabin more than four years, and it had already been moved away, four miles, to the northward, where it stood, till it fell in pieces from decay, — a farmer's small granary for corn and beans, and the haunt of squirrels and jays. But he was in the habit of re-visiting Walden often, and some of his most characteristic pages in this book were drawn from observations made long after he was living again with his family.

Again, the adventure with the loon, in the same chapter with the ant-battle, really occurred October 8, 1852. The pages of *Walden* contain passages from the Journals as early as 1838, and

as late as April 27, 1854, — a period of sixteen years, and not merely the twenty-six months that he lived at his hermitage.

This conspicuous want of connection in the Journal pages, at first adopted, possibly, to save paper (for the author was very frugal), grew to be almost a habit in his published essays and chapters. Yet his custom was to select from the rich "wrecks of matter and crush of worlds" noted down for his daily Journal such passages as could be connected into a consecutive thesis, long or short; and to make up his chapters of such material, having a more or less obvious relation to the topic selected for a title. His wide and constant reading, and his original thinking, no less rich and constant, furnished him copiously for illustrations and digressions; and when you enter upon a chapter headed "Reading" or "Solitude" or "Visitors," you never know where you may unexpectedly come out, — it may be in Greece with Homer, in China with Confucius, or in the Concord pastures with John Le Gross. The shortest of his chapters in *Walden* as he left them, was "The Village;" his longest, "Economy;" but much that the inordinately long one contained related to "The Village," and some of it has now been placed there.

The beginning of the passage about architects and architecture had for its origin a longer passage in the Journal of January 11, 1852, which in turn was suggested by a letter received by Emerson from his friend, the sculptor Greenough, in Italy. Thoreau presently goes on in the Journal to liken Greenough in reforming architecture,

to Ellery Channing in social matters. "He began at the cornice, . . . seemed to me to lean over the cornice and timidly whisper his half-truth to the rude indwellers, who really knew it more interiorly than he. . . . Grow your own house, I say. Build it after an Orphean fashion. When Emerson and Greenough have got a few blocks finished and advertised, I will look at them." All this jest and earnest about houses belongs in the notice of Concord Village, and in a thorough re-arrangement of the chapters would go into that chapter. The topic was introduced by Emerson to Channing, as well as to Thoreau, and what Channing made of it in his fanciful "Walks and Talks" in his *Life of Thoreau* may be seen in his chapter called "The Latter Year." All these pages grew out of Greenough's letter to Emerson, — a good instance of how these three friends, in their walks, gave each other the topic for an afternoon conversation.

Of course a book made up in this peculiar way, and passing swiftly from one theme and style to another, needs many illustrative notes. These notes I have attempted to furnish; and many more might be added from the Journals as printed. The information thus presented ought to give the book a closer personal interest; bringing forward, as it now does, the very individuals among whom the author moved, and whom, without having printed their names, he so vividly portrays in his pages.

A few words here and there might suggest a long story. Thus he says, "In the beginning of May, 1845, with the help of some of my acquaint-

ances (rather to improve so good an occasion for neighborliness than from any necessity), I set up the frame of my house."

Who these acquaintances were, we learn from Mr. Cooke, one of the biographers of George William Curtis: Alcott, lately returned to Concord from the lost Paradise of Fruitlands; Emerson, Ellery Channing, the two Curtises, George and Burrill, who had migrated from Brook Farm to Ponkatassett Hill a year before; and the sturdy farmer, Edmund Hosmer, with his sons, John, Edmund and Andrew. Alcott was then living near the Hosmers on one of the Lincoln roads, and the Curtises were in the same neighborhood.

This biographer (Cooke) adds, "It was Thoreau's custom while at Walden to dine on Sundays with Emerson, and to stop at Hosmer's on the way back to the pond, often remaining to supper." All the persons named here figure more or less in the book, but commonly without their names. So do Polyphemus, the one-eyed hunter, Goodwin, and his comrade, Sam Haynes, Melvin and Puffer, Therien the Canadian woodchopper, and George Minott, whom Thoreau compared to Claudian's Old Man of Verona, and whose death he pathetically mentioned in a letter written, but never sent, to his New Bedford friend, Ricketson, — now printed in my *Familiar Letters* of Thoreau, under date of March 19, 1861.

Here and there in the manuscript, Thoreau mentions or alludes to a certain underwitted Concord man, Bill Wheeler by name, and finally describes the finding of his remains in an unfrequented place where he had died unobserved. I

think he was the person mentioned in a note to Chapter XVI, who inquired if the Pond was not "pooty watery." I have therefore placed in a note at the end of that chapter this passage, for which no other good place is found.

I expect that *Walden* will continue to be, as it always has been, the most popular of Thoreau's books, and that his readers, in this and the coming centuries, will wish to know more, rather than less, of the persons who appear and re-appear in these pages. Some of them were substantial and unforgotten people, whose biographies have been published, and their writings read; but many of them are but casual and misty figures in the Concord landscape, seen or vanishing like those which Channing recalled in his farewell to Monadnoc, in 1869, where, years before, he had spent such golden days with Thoreau. —

> Now flit abroad
> Dim figures on the solitary stones;
> Almost I see the figure of my Friend
> Scaling the heights or running o'er the slabs, —
> I hear his call, for which I listened long;
> His fresh response, as swift I shouted back,
> Echoes in space, — I see his light form bound
> Over the dark crevasse, or thread the slide.
> Stay! 't was a shadow fluttering off the Past,
> A multiplex of dreams that kindled thus.

Dreams or recollections, it is these which have accompanied me in this sadly pleasing task of an editor.

F. B. Sanborn.

Concord, July 17, 1908.

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Facsimile of corrected page of text x

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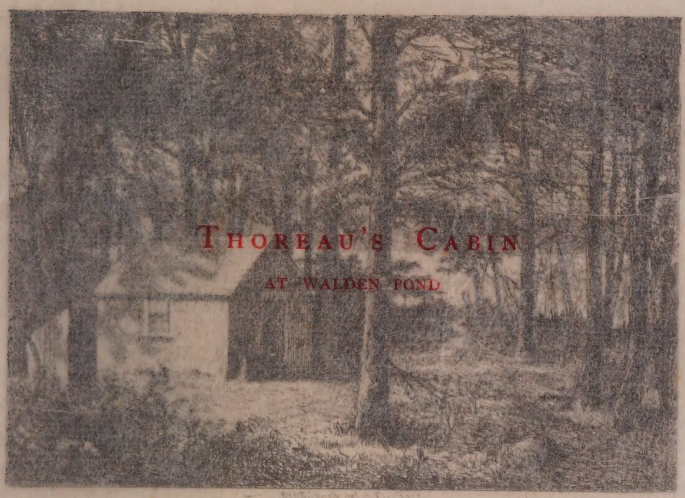

WHERE I LIVED, AND WHAT I LIVED FOR

Where I have been
There was none seen.

NEARLY all of this volume, addressed to my townsmen, was written eight or nine years ago[1] in the scenery and under the circumstances which it describes; and a considerable part was read at that time as lectures before the Concord Lyceum. In what is now added, the object has been chiefly to make it a complete and true account of that portion of the author's life.

[1] This was early in 1854, when Thoreau was preparing his MS. for the press. The lectures were in 1846–49. — F. B. S.

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I lived then alone in the woods, a mile from any neighbor, in a house which I had built myself, on the shore of Walden Pond, in Concord, Massachusetts, and earned my living by the labor of my hands only. I lived there two years and two months. At present I am a sojourner in civilized life again.

I should not obtrude my affairs so much on the notice of my readers if very particular inquiries had not been made by my townsmen concerning my mode of life, — which some would call impertinent, though they do not appear to me at all impertinent; but, considering the circumstances, very natural and pertinent. Some have asked me what I got to eat; if I did not feel "kind of lonesome;" if I was n't afraid; what I should do if I were taken sick, and the like. Others have been curious to learn what portion of my income I devoted to charitable purposes; and some, who have large families, how many poor children I maintained. I will therefore ask those of my readers who feel no particular interest in me to pardon me if I undertake to answer some of these questions in this book.[1] I warn you that I shall

[1] Thoreau seems to have given his first Walden lecture at the village Lyceum, in the vestry of the First Parish Church, in the winter of 1846–47. A year later, in taking up the subject as above, he says in the original manuscript, now owned by Mr. Bixby: —

"After I lectured to my townsmen last winter, I heard that some had expected that I would answer these questions in my lecture. So I must ask all strangers, and all who have little or no interest in me among this audience to pardon me if I undertake to answer them in part now."

In a repetition of the lecture in the winter of 1848–49,

brag a good deal more than is according to the accepted rules of good taste; shall brag for you as well as for myself. Taste and I parted company long ago.

In most books, the *I*, or first person, is omitted; in this it will be retained; that, in respect to egotism, is the main difference. We commonly do not remember that it is, after all, always the first person that is speaking.

I should not talk so much about myself if there were anybody else whom I knew as well. Unfortunately, I am confined to this theme by the narrowness of my experience. Moreover, for my own part, I require of every writer a simple and sincere account of his own life, rather than what he has heard of other men's lives; some such account as he would send to his kindred from a distant land, — for if he has lived sincerely, it must have been in a distant land to me, — describing even his outward circumstances and what adventures he has had, as well as his thoughts and feelings about them. That he give me that which is most precious to him; not his life's

when some of his townsmen were setting forth gold-seeking in California, Thoreau added, on the reverse of a page, —

"To show how little men have considered what is the true end of life, or the nature of their living which they have to get, I need only remind you how many have, within the last month, started for California with the muck-rake on their shoulders. According to the precepts of the received catechism, — as if our life were a farce, and God had cast down one of his handfuls of true believing on to the mountains of California, for men to scramble for." — F. B. S.

blood, but even that for which his life's blood circulated, — what he has got by living. If anything has yielded him pleasure or instruction let him communicate it. Let the money-getter, when he takes up the pen, tell us how much he loves wealth, and what means he takes to accumulate it. He must describe those facts which he knows, better than anybody else. *He* should not write on Foreign Missions. The mechanic will naturally write about his trade, the farmer about his farm, and every man about that which he understands better than others; that is, his own affairs.

Yet incredible mistakes are made. As if an owl were to lecture with a perverse show of learning on the solar microscope, or chanticleer on nebulous stars, when both should be sound asleep; the one in a hollow tree, the other upon his roost!

Perhaps these pages are more particularly addressed to poor students. As for the rest of my readers, they will accept such portions as apply to them. I trust that none will stretch the seams in putting on the coat, for it may do good service to him whom it fits.

Men labor under a mistake. The better part of the man is soon plowed into the soil for compost. By a seeming fate, commonly called necessity, they are employed (as it says in an old book) laying up treasures which moth and rust will corrupt, and thieves break through and steal. It is a fool's life, as they will find when they get to the end of it, if not before. It is said that Deucalion and Pyrrha created men by throwing stones over their heads behind them. Ovid says: —

Inde genus durum sumus, experiensque laborum,
Et documenta damus qua simus origine nati.

Or, as Raleigh rhymes it in his sonorous way, —

From thence our kind hard-hearted is, enduring pain and care,
Approving that our bodies of a stony nature are.

So much for a blind obedience to a blundering oracle, — throwing the stones over their heads behind them, and not seeing where they fell.[1]

If I should attempt to tell how I have desired to spend my life in years past, it would probably surprise those of my readers who are somewhat acquainted with its actual history; it would certainly astonish those who know nothing about it. I will only hint at some of the enterprises which I have cherished. In any weather, at any hour

[1] The Deucalion and Pyrrha passage in the Economy chapter (here transferred to the first chapter) reads differently, and is more racy in the MS.: "It is said that Deucalion and Pyrrha created men by throwing stones over their heads behind them. But that was not the best way to create men, nor the best material to create them out of. They might at least have seen where they threw the stones. But perhaps they did not rightly interpret the oracle which directed them to cast behind them the bones of their grandmother, — by which it may have meant the institutions of the dead. At any rate, men must be *re*-created after a different fashion. So much for a blind obedience to a blundering oracle." Before settling down at Walden, Thoreau had made a very careful reading of Raleigh, both of his poems (then very little known in America) and of his *History of the World*. The result appears in his sketch of Raleigh printed, for the first time, in 1906, by The Bibliophile Society. — F. B. S.

of the day, or night, I have been anxious to improve the nick of time, and notch it on my stick too; to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the Past and Future, which is precisely the present moment; to toe that line.

You will pardon some obscurities, for I believe there are more secrets in my trade than in most men's, and yet not voluntary ones either, but inseparable from its very nature. I would gladly tell all that I know about it, and never paint " No Admittance " on my gate.

How many mornings, summer and winter, before yet any man was stirring about *his* business, have I been about mine, — to anticipate, not the sunrise and the dawn merely, but if possible, Nature herself. No doubt some of my readers have met me returning from this enterprise, — farmers starting for Boston in the twilight, or woodchoppers going to their work. To be sure, I never assisted the sun materially in his rising; but doubt not it was of the last importance only to be present at it.

How many an afternoon has been stolen from more profitable if not more attractive industry, — afternoons when a good run of custom might have been expected on the Main Street, tempting all womankind out a-shopping, — spent, I say, by me on the margin of the meadows, in the well-nigh hopeless attempt to set the river on fire, — or be set on fire by it, — with such tinder as I had, with such flint as I was![1]

[1] We have inserted here from the MS. several quaint passages not found in print, and the paragraphs are di-

So many autumn, ay, and winter, days spent outside the town, trying to hear what was in the wind, — to hear and carry it express! I well-nigh sunk all my capital in it, and lost my own breath into the bargain, running in the face of it. If it had concerned either of the political parties, depend upon it, it would have appeared in the Gazette, with the earliest intelligence. At other times, watching from the observatory of the Cliffs, or some tree, to telegraph any new arrival; or waiting at evening on the hill-tops for the sky to fall, that I might catch something, — though I never caught much, — only a little manna that would dissolve again in the sun.

For a long time I was reporter to a Journal of no very wide circulation, whose editor has never yet seen fit to print the bulk of my contributions; and as is too common with writers, I got only my labor for my pains. Literary contracts are little binding. However, in this case my pains were their own reward.

For many years I was self-appointed inspector of snow-storms and rain-storms, and did my duty faithfully; surveyor, if not of highways, then of forest paths and all across-lot routes, — keeping them open, and ravines bridged and passable at all seasons, where the public heel had testified to their utility. I have looked after the wild stock of the town, which pasture in common, and, as every one knows, give a faithful herdsman a good

vided differently. The whole is very descriptive of the localities of Concord, — the "Cliffs" being near where Mr. Adams now owns on Fair Haven hill, east of the river. — F. B. S.

deal of trouble in the way of leaping fences; and I have had an eye to the unfrequented nooks and corners of the farm. Though I did not always know whether Jonas or Solomon worked in a particular field today; that was none of my business.

I have watered the red huckleberry, the sand-cherry and the nettle tree; the red pine, and the black ash; the cornel, the white grape and the yellow violet, — which might have withered else in dry seasons.[1] In short, I went on thus for a long time (I may say it without boasting), faithfully minding my business; till it became more and more evident that my townsmen would not, after all, admit me into the list of town officers, — nor make my place a sinecure, with a moderate allowance. My accounts, indeed, which I can swear to have been faithfully kept, I have never got audited, still less accepted, — still less paid and settled. However, I have not set my heart on that. I found, in short, that they were not likely to offer me any office in the Court House[2] or any

[1] It will be noticed that Thoreau names here, as the special objects of his fostering care, the fruits and flowers for which most of his townsmen cared little or nothing, — or else those which were rather neglected, though comparatively rare, like the white grape and the yellow violet. Concord woods are full of wild grapes, both red and white; and from some of these by seedlings his neighbor Mr. Bull and another neighbor, John Moore, afterwards developed excellent cultivated varieties. Much that is said above is, of course, in a strain of grave humor, for which, in this author, the reader must be continually on the watch. — F. B. S.

[2] During all Thoreau's life the old town of Concord

curacy or living anywhere else, but I must shift for myself. So I turned my face more exclusively than ever to the woods, where I was better known. I determined to go into business at once, and not wait to acquire the usual capital, using such slender means as I had already got. Strict business habits I have always endeavored to acquire. They are indispensable to every man.

If your trade is with the Celestial Empire, then some small counting-house on the coast, in some Salem harbor, will be fixture enough. You will export such articles as the country affords, purely native products, much ice and pine timber and a little granite, always in native bottoms. These will be good ventures. To oversee all the details yourself in person; to be at once pilot and captain, and owner and underwriter; to buy and sell and keep the accounts; to read every letter re-

was one of the shire towns of Middlesex County, and the Court House there held various county officers, and was also occupied in part by practising lawyers who did more or less official business. Major Hosmer, in one of whose houses west of the village Bronson Alcott lived for a few years, was for years the High Sheriff of the County, and Steadman Buttrick, a descendant of the Revolutionary Major, who commanded at the North Bridge, was for an equal series of years county treasurer, — both with offices in the Court House. In the passage above Thoreau uses the technical language familiar to his townsmen in their county and town affairs, giving it a quizzing turn.

As for his reasons for removing to Walden, the practical one was to complete and edit, from his copious journals, his first book, *The Week,* which he could do better in the solitude of Emerson's pines than in the bustle and hospitality of his father's house in the midst of the village. The spiritual reason is briefly stated. — F. B. S.

ceived, and write and read every letter sent; to superintend the discharge of imports night and day; to be upon many parts of the coast almost at the same time, — often the richest freight will be discharged upon a Jersey shore; — to be your own telegraph, unweariedly sweeping the horizon, speaking all passing vessels bound coastwise; to keep up a steady despatch of commodities, for the supply of such a distant and exorbitant market; to keep yourself informed of the state of the markets, prospects of war and peace everywhere, and anticipate the tendencies of trade and civilization, — taking advantage of the results of all exploring expeditions, using new passages and all improvements in navigation; — charts to be studied, the position of reefs and new lights and buoys to be ascertained, and ever, and ever, the logarithmic tables to be corrected, for by the error of some calculator the vessel often splits upon a rock that should have reached a friendly pier, — there is the untold fate of *La Perouse;* — universal science to be kept pace with, studying the lives of all great discoverers and navigators, great adventurers and merchants, from Hanno and the Phœnicians down to our day; in fine, account of stock to be taken from time to time, to know how you stand. It is a labor to task the faculties of a man, — such problems of profit and loss, of interest, of tare and tret, and gauging of all kinds in it, as demand a universal knowledge.

I have thought that Walden Pond would be a good place for business, not solely on account of the railroad and the ice-trade, — it offers advantages which it may not be good policy to divulge;

it is a good post and a good foundation. No Neva[1] marshes to be filled; though you must everywhere build on piles of your own driving. My purpose in going there was not to live cheaply nor to live dearly, but to transact some private business with the fewest obstacles; to be hindered from accomplishing which, for want of a little common sense, a little enterprise and business talent, appeared not so sad as foolish. I there found that the student who wishes for a shelter, can obtain one for a lifetime at an expense not greater than the rent he now pays annually. I intend to build me a house which will surpass any on the Main Street of Concord, in grandeur and luxury, — as soon as it pleases me as much, and will cost me no more than the one I built at Walden.

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, — to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, — and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life (living is so dear); nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary.

I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the

[1] *Note by Thoreau:* It is said that a flood-tide (with a westerly wind, and ice in the Neva) would sweep St. Petersburg from the face of the earth.

world; or throw it in the teeth of him that made it, as it were; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion. For most men, it appears to me, are in a strange uncertainty about it, whether it is of the devil or of God, and have *somewhat hastily* concluded that it is the chief end of man here to "glorify God and enjoy Him forever," when there may be no enjoyment in it. If the truth were known, they enjoy the devil a good deal more. I am not satisfied with such a lumping up and glossing over the objects of life.

Near the end of March, 1845, I borrowed an axe and went down to the woods by Walden Pond, nearest to where I intended to build my house, and began to cut down some tall arrowy white pines, still in their youth, for timber. It is difficult to begin without borrowing, but perhaps it is the most generous course thus to permit your fellowmen to have an interest in your enterprise. Our very life is in one sense borrowed and must be returned, with interest, to him who lent it. In this case the owner of the axe, as he released his hold on it, said that it was the apple of his eye; but I returned it sharper than I received it. It was a pleasant hillside where I worked, covered with pine woods, through which I looked out on the pond, and on a small open field in the woods where pines and hickories were springing up.

The ice in the pond was not yet dissolved, though there were some open spaces, and it was all dark-colored and saturated with water. There were some slight flurries of snow during the days that I worked there; but for the most part when

I came out on to the railroad, on my way home, its yellow sand heap stretched away gleaming in the hazy atmosphere, and the rails shone in the spring sun, and I heard the lark and pewee and other birds already come to commence another year with us. They were pleasant spring days, in which the winter of man's discontent was thawing as well as the earth, and the life that had lain torpid began to stretch itself.

I remember that one day, when my axe had come off and I had cut a green hickory for a wedge, driving it with a stone, and had placed the whole to soak in a pond hole in order to swell the wood, I saw a striped snake run into the water, and he lay on the bottom, apparently without inconvenience, as long as I stayed there, or more than a quarter-of-an-hour — and I know not how much longer he remained there — perhaps because he had not yet fairly come out of the torpid state. It appeared to me that for a like reason men remain in their present low and primitive condition; but if they should feel the influence of the spring of springs arousing them, they would of necessity rise to a higher and more ethereal life. I had previously seen the snakes in frosty mornings in my path with portions of their bodies still numb and inflexible, waiting for the sun to thaw them.

On the 1st of April it rained and melted the ice, and in the early part of the day, which was very foggy, I heard a stray goose groping about over the pond and cackling as if lost, or like the spirit of the fog.

So I went on for some days cutting and hewing

timber, and also studs and rafters, all with my narrow axe, not having many communicable or scholar-like thoughts, singing to myself, —

> Men say they know many things;
> But lo! they have taken wings, —
> The arts and sciences,
> And a thousand appliances;
> The wind that blows
> Is all that anybody knows.

I hewed the main timbers six inches square, most of the studs on two sides only, and the rafters and floor timbers on one side, leaving the rest of the bark on, so that they were just as straight and much stronger than sawed ones. Each stick was carefully mortised or tenoned by its stump, for I had borrowed other tools by this time. My days in the woods were not very long ones; yet I usually carried my dinner of bread and butter, and read the newspaper in which it was wrapped, at noon, sitting amid the green pine boughs which I had cut off, and to my bread was imparted some of their fragrance, for my hands were covered with a thick coat of pitch. Before I had done I was more the friend than the foe of the pine tree, though I had cut down some of them, having become better acquainted with it. Sometimes a rambler in the woods was attracted by the sound of my axe, and we chatted pleasantly over the chips which I made.

By the middle of April, for I made no haste in my work, but rather made the most of it, my house was framed and ready for the raising. I had already bought the shanty of James Collins, an

Irishman who worked on the Fitchburg Railroad, for boards. James Collins' shanty was considered an uncommonly fine one. When I called to see it he was not at home. I walked about the outside, at first unobserved from within, the window was so deep and high. It was of small dimensions, with a peaked cottage roof, and not much else to be seen, the dirt being raised five feet all around as if it were a compost heap. The roof was the soundest part, though a good deal warped and made brittle by the sun. Door-sill there was none, but a perennial passage for the hens under the door board. Mrs. C. came to the door and asked me to view it from the inside. The hens were driven in by my approach. It was dark, and had a dirt floor for the most part, dank, clammy, and aguish, only here a board and there a board which would not bear removal. She lighted a lamp to show me the inside of the roof and the walls, and also that the board floor extended under the bed, warning me not to step into the cellar, a sort of dust-hole two feet deep. In her own words, they were "good boards overhead, good boards all around, and a good window" — of two whole squares originally, only the cat had passed out that way lately.

There was a stove, a bed, and a place to sit, an infant in the house where it was born, a silk parasol, gilt-framed looking-glass, and a patent new coffee-mill nailed to an oak sapling, all told. The bargain was soon concluded, for James had in the meanwhile returned. I to pay four dollars and twenty-five cents tonight, he to vacate at five tomorrow morning, selling to nobody else mean-

while: I to take possession at six. It were well, he said, to be there early, and anticipate certain indistinct but wholly unjust claims on the score of ground-rent and fuel. This he assured me was the only encumbrance. At six I passed him and his family on the road. One large bundle held their all — bed, coffee-mill, looking-glass, hens — all but the cat; she took to the woods and became a wild cat, and, as I learned afterward, trod in a trap set for woodchucks, and so became a dead cat at last.

I took down this dwelling the same morning, drawing the nails, and removed it to the pond-side by small cartloads, spreading the boards on the grass there to bleach and warp back again in the sun. One early thrush gave me a note or two as I drove along the woodland path. I was informed treacherously by a young Patrick that neighbor Seeley, an Irishman, in the intervals of the carting, transferred the still tolerable, straight, and drivable nails, staples, and spikes to his pocket, and then stood when I came back to pass the time of day, and look freshly up, unconcerned, with spring thoughts, at the devastation; there being a dearth of work, as he said. He was there to represent spectatordom, and help make this seemingly insignificant event one with the removal of the gods of Troy.

I dug my cellar in the side of a hill sloping to the south, where a woodchuck had formerly dug his burrow, down through sumach and blackberry roots, and the lowest stain of vegetation, six feet square by seven deep, to a fine sand where potatoes would not freeze in any winter. The sides

were left shelving, and not stoned; but the sun having never shone on them, the sand still keeps its place. It was but two hours' work. I took particular pleasure in this breaking of ground, for in almost all latitudes men dig into the earth for an equable temperature.

Under the most splendid house in the city is still to be found the cellar where they store their roots as of old, and long after the superstructure has disappeared posterity remark its dent in the earth. The house is still but a sort of porch at the entrance of a burrow.

At length, in the beginning of May, with the help of some of my acquaintances, rather to improve so good an occasion for neighborliness than from any necessity, I set up the frame of my house. No man was ever more honored in the character of his raisers than I. They are destined, I trust, to assist at the raising of loftier structures one day. I began to occupy my house on the 4th of July, as soon as it was boarded and roofed, for the boards were carefully feather-edged and lapped, so that it was perfectly impervious to rain, but before boarding I laid the foundation of a chimney at one end, bringing two cartloads of stones up the hill from the pond in my arms. I built the chimney after my hoeing in the fall, before a fire became necessary for warmth, doing my cooking in the meanwhile out of doors on the ground, early in the morning; which mode I still think is in some respects more convenient and agreeable than the usual one. When it stormed before my bread was baked, I fixed a few boards over the fire, and sat under them to watch my

loaf, and passed some pleasant hours in that way.

When I was fairly established in my house, I sang this song: —

I seek the Present Time,
No other clime,
Life in today,
Not to sail another way,
To Paris or to Rome,
Or farther still from home.

That man, whoe'er he is,
Lives but a moral death,
Whose life is not coeval
With his breath.

My feet forever stand
On Concord fields,
And I must live the life
Which their soil yields.
What are deeds done
Away from home?
What the best essay
On the Ruins of Rome?

The love of the new,
The unfathomed blue,
The wind in the wood,
All future good, —
The sunlit tree,
The small chicadee,
The dusty highways,
What Scripture says,
This pleasant weather
And all signs together, —
The river's meander, —
All things, in short,
Forbid me to wander
In deed or in thought,

In cold or in drouth
Not seek the sunny South,
But make the whole tour
Of the sunny Present Hour.

For here if thou fail,
Where canst thou prevail?
If you love not
  Your own land most,
You 'll find nothing lovely
  Upon a distant coast.[1]

In those days, when my hands were much employed, I read but little in books, but the least scraps of paper which lay on the ground, my holder, or tablecloth, afforded me as much entertainment; in fact, answered the same purpose as the Iliad.

Before winter I built a chimney, and shingled the sides of my house, which were already impervious to rain, with imperfect and sappy shingles made of the first slice of the log, whose edges I was obliged to straighten with a plane.

I have thus a tight shingled and plastered house, ten feet wide by fifteen long, eight-feet posts, with a garret and a closet, a large window on each side, two trap-doors, one door at the end, and a brick fire-place opposite. The exact cost of my house, paying the usual price for such materials as I used, but not counting the work, all of which was done by myself, was as follows; and

[1] It is perhaps not to be wondered at that this poem, or song, was omitted from the printed editions. It, however, gives a characteristic reflection of the author's musings, and is here printed just as he wrote it. — H. H. H.

I give the details because very few are able to tell exactly what their houses cost, and fewer still, if any, the separate cost of the various materials which compose them: —

Boards	$8 03½	Mostly shanty boards.
Refuse shingles for roof and sides	4 00	
Laths	1 25	
Two second-hand windows with glass	2 43	
One thousand old bricks	4 00	
Two casks of lime	2 40	That was high.
Hair	0 31	More than I needed.
Mantel-tree iron	0 15	
Nails	3 90	
Hinges and screws	0 14	
Latch	0 10	Finished by myself.
Chalk	0 01	
Transportation	1 40	I carried a good part on my back.
In all	$28 12½	

These are all the materials which entered into its composition, excepting the timber, stones, and sand, which I claimed by squatter's right. I have also a small wood-shed adjoining, made chiefly of the stuff which was left after building the house.

Before I finished my house, wishing to earn ten or twelve dollars by some honest and agreeable method, in order to meet my unusual expenses, I planted about two acres and a half of light and sandy soil near it chiefly with beans, but also a small part with potatoes, corn, peas, and turnips. The whole lot contains eleven acres, mostly growing up to pines and hickories, and was sold the preceding season for eight dollars and eight cents

an acre. One farmer said that it was " good for nothing but to raise cheeping squirrels on."

I put no manure nor any quickener whatever on this land, not being the owner, but merely a squatter, and not expecting to cultivate so much again, and I did not quite hoe it all once. I got out several cords of stumps in ploughing, which supplied me with fuel for a long time, and left small circles of virgin mould, easily distinguishable through the summer by the greater luxuriance of the beans there. The dead and for the most part unmerchantable wood behind my house, and the driftwood from the pond, have supplied the remainder of my fuel. I was obliged to hire a team and a man for the ploughing, though I held the plough myself.

My farm outgoes for the first season were, for implements, seed, work, etc., $14.72½. The seed corn was given me. This never costs anything to speak of, unless you plant more than enough. I got twelve bushels of beans, and eighteen bushels of potatoes, beside some peas and sweet corn. The yellow corn and turnips were too late to come to anything. My whole income from the farm was: —

	$23 44
Deducting the outgoes	14 72½
There are left	$8 71½

beside produce consumed and on hand at the time this estimate was made of the value of $4.50 — the amount on hand much more than balancing a little grass which I did not raise. All things considered, that is, considering the importance of a

man's soul and of today, notwithstanding the short time occupied by my experiment, nay, partly even because of its transient character, I believe that that was doing better than any farmer in Concord did that year.

The next year I did better still, for I spaded up all the land which I required, about a third of an acre, and I learned from the experience of both years, not being in the least awed by many celebrated works on husbandry,— Arthur Young among the rest, — that if one would live simply and eat only the crop which he raised, and raise no more than he ate, and not exchange it for an insufficient quantity of more luxurious and expensive things, he would need to cultivate only a few rods of ground, and that it would be cheaper to spade up that than to use oxen to plough it, and to select a fresh spot from time to time than to manure the old, and he could do all his necessary farm work as it were with his left hand at odd hours in the summer; and thus he would not be tied to an ox, or horse, or cow, or pig, as at present. I desire to speak impartially on this point, and as one not interested in the success or failure of the present economical and social arrangements.

I was more independent than any farmer in Concord, for I was not anchored to a house or farm, but could follow the bent of my genius, which is a very crooked one, every moment. Beside being better off than they already, if my house had been burned or my crops had failed, I should have been nearly as well off as before.

My furniture, part of which I made myself, and

the rest cost me nothing of which I have not rendered an account, consisted of a bed, a table, a desk, three chairs, a looking-glass three inches in diameter, a pair of tongs and andirons, a kettle, a skillet, and a frying-pan, a dipper, a wash-bowl, two knives and forks, three plates, one cup, one spoon, a jug for oil, a jug for molasses, and a japanned lamp. None is so poor that he need sit on a pumpkin. That is shiftlessness. There is a plenty of such chairs as I like best in the village garrets to be had for taking them away.

Furniture! Thank God, I can sit and I can stand and go to sleep without the aid of a furniture warehouse. What man but a philosopher would not be ashamed to see his furniture packed in a cart and going up country exposed to the light of heaven and the eyes of men, a beggarly account of empty boxes? That is Spaulding's furniture! I could never tell from inspecting such a load whether it belonged to a so-called rich man or a poor one; the owner always seemed poverty-stricken. Indeed, the more you have of such things the poorer you are. Each load looks as if it contained the contents of a dozen shanties; and if one shanty is poor, this is a dozen times as poor. Pray, for what do we *move* ever but to get rid of our furniture, our *exuviæ;* at last to go from this world to another newly furnished, and leave this to be burned?

It is the same as if all these traps were buckled to a man's belt, and he could not move over the rough country where our lines are cast without dragging them, — dragging his trap. He was a lucky fox that left his tail in the trap. The

muskrat will gnaw his third leg off to be free. No wonder man has lost his elasticity. How often he is at a dead set! "Sir, if I may be so bold, what do you mean by a dead set?" If you are a seer, whenever you meet a man you will see all that he owns, ay, and much that he pretends to disown, behind him, even to his kitchen furniture and all the trumpery which he saves and will not burn, and he will appear to be harnessed to it and making what headway he can.

I think that the man is at a dead set who has got through a knothole or gateway where his sledge load of furniture cannot follow him. I cannot but feel compassion when I hear some trig, compact-looking man, seemingly free, all girded and ready, speak of his "furniture," as whether it is insured or not. "But what shall I do with my furniture?" My gay butterfly is entangled in a spider's web then. Even those who seem for a long while not to have any, if you inquire more narrowly you will find have some stored in somebody's barn.

I look upon England today as an old gentleman who is travelling with a great deal of baggage, trumpery which has accumulated from long housekeeping, which he has not the courage to burn; great trunk, little trunk, bandbox and bundle. Throw away the first three at least. It would surpass the powers of a well man nowadays to take up his bed and walk, and I should certainly advise a sick one to lay down his bed and run. When I have met an immigrant tottering under a bundle which contained his all — looking like an enormous wen which had grown out of

the nape of his neck — I have pitied him, not because that was his all, but because he had all *that* to carry. If I have got to drag my trap, I will take care that it is a light one and do not nip me in a vital part. But perchance it would be wisest never to put one's paw into it.

I would observe, by the way, that it costs me nothing for curtains, for I have no gazers to shut out but the sun and moon, and I am willing that they should look in. The moon will not sour milk nor taint meat of mine, nor will the sun injure any furniture or fade my carpet, and if he is sometimes too warm a friend, I find it still better economy to retreat behind some curtain which nature has provided, than to add a single item to the details of housekeeping.

A lady once offered me a mat, but as I had no room to spare within the house, nor time to spare within or without to shake it, I declined it, preferring to wipe my feet on the sod before my door. It is best to avoid the beginnings of evil.

Not long since I was present at the auction of a deacon's effects, for his life had not been ineffectual: —

> " The evil that men do lives after them."

As usual, a great proportion was trumpery which had begun to accumulate in his father's day. Among the rest was a dried tapeworm. And now, after lying half a century in his garret and other dust-holes, these things were not burned; instead of a bonfire, or purifying destruction of them, there was an *auction,* or increasing of them. The neighbors eagerly collected to view them,

bought them all and carefully transported them to their garrets and dust-holes, to lie there till their estates are settled, when they will start again. When a man dies, men say "he kicks the dust."

Where I lived now was as far off as many a region viewed nightly by astronomers. Both place and time had undergone a revolution, and I seemed to dwell nearer to those parts of the globe, and to those eras in history, which had attracted me; and as I had no clock but the sun and moon, I also lived in a more primitive time. Let us rise early, and fast or break fast gently, and without perturbation. What if the milkman does not come in season to whitewash our coffee? Let us murmur an inward prayer that we may be sustained under this trial, — and forget him.

But to proceed with my statistics. By surveying, carpentry, and day-labor of various other kinds in the village, in the meanwhile, — for I have as many trades as fingers, — I had earned $13.34. The expense of food for eight months, — namely, from July 4th to March 1st (1846, the time when these estimates were made, though I lived there a little more than two years) — not counting potatoes, a little green corn, and some peas, which I had raised, nor considering the value of what was on hand, March 1st, — I say the cost of food was, —

Rice	$1 73½	
Molasses	1 73	Cheapest form of the saccharine.
Rye meal	1 04¾	
Indian meal	0 99¾	Cheaper than rye.
Pork	0 22	

Flour	0 88	Costs more than Indian meal, both money and trouble.	All experiments which failed.
Sugar	0 80		
Lard	0 65		
Apples	0 25		
Dried apple	0 22		
Sweet potatoes	0 10		
One pumpkin	0 6		
One water-melon	0 2		
Salt	0 3		

Yes, I did eat $8.74, all told; but I should not thus unblushingly publish my guilt, if I did not know that most of my readers were equally guilty with myself, and that their deeds would look no better in print. The next year I sometimes caught a mess of fish for my dinner, and once I went so far as to slaughter a woodchuck which ravaged my bean-field — effect his transmigration, as a Tartar would say — and devour him, partly for experiment's sake; but though it afforded me momentary enjoyment, notwithstanding a musky flavor, I saw that the longest use would not make that a good practice, however it might seem, to have your woodchucks ready dressed by the village butcher.[1]

[1] Thoreau set traps to protect his bean-field and, besides a woodchuck, once caught therein a *mephitis*, or ordinary skunk, — also an edible animal, but not to his delicate taste. Moreover, in the agonies of captivity he had malodorized the steel trap, and the naturalist tried in vain to remove the scent by washing it in the pond. Complaining to young Henry Warren, a former pupil, he was told he had not acquired all the woodman's art; for it was only needful to bury the trap in earth to disinfect it, which he then did. As for the washing and mending bills, they

Clothing and some incidental expenses within the same dates, though little can be inferred from this item, amounted to —

	$8 40¾
Oil and some household utensils	2 00

So that all the pecuniary outgoes — excepting for washing and mending, which for the most part were done out of the house, and their bills have not yet been received; and these are all and more than all the ways by which money necessarily goes out, in this part of the world — were:

House	$28 12½
Farm, one year	14 72½
Food, eight months	8 74
Clothing, etc., eight months	8 41
Oil, etc., eight months	2 00
In all	$62 00

I am thus particular because I address myself now to those of my readers who have a living to get. And to meet this I have, for farm produce sold —

	$23 44
Earned by day labor	13 34
In all	$36 78

Which, subtracted from the sum of the outgoes ($62.00) leaves a balance of $25.22 on the one side, — this being very nearly the means with which I started, and the measure of expenses to be incurred, — and on the other side, beside the

never came in, because that work was done by his mother's family, who also supplied Henry with occasional dainties. But his account is mainly fair. — F. B. S.

leisure and health and independence thus secured, a comfortable house for me, as long as I choose to occupy it.

These statistics, however accidental, and therefore uninstructive, they may appear, — as they have a certain completeness, have a certain value also. Nothing was given me of which I have not rendered some account. It appears that my food cost me alone, in money, about twenty-seven cents a week. It was, for nearly two years after this, rye and Indian meal — without yeast — potatoes, rice, a very little salt pork, molasses and salt; and my drink, water. It was fit that I should live on rice, mainly, who loved so well the philosophy of India. To meet the objections of some inveterate cavillers, I may as well state that, if I dined out occasionally, as I always had done, and I trust shall have opportunities to do again, it was frequently to the detriment of my domestic arrangements. But the dining out being, as I have stated, a constant element, does not in the least affect a comparative statement like this.

Bread I at first made of pure Indian meal and salt, genuine hoe-cakes, which I baked before my fire out of doors on a shingle or the end of a stick of timber sawed off in building my house; but it was wont to get smoked and to have a piny flavor. I tried flour also, but have at last found a mixture of rye and Indian meal most convenient and agreeable. In cold weather it was no little amusement to bake several small loaves of this in succession, tending and turning them as carefully as an Egyptian his hatching eggs. They were a real cereal fruit which I ripened, and they had to my

senses a fragrance like that of other noble fruits, which I kept in as long as possible by wrapping them in cloths.

I made a study of the ancient and indispensable art of bread-making, consulting such authorities as offered, going back to the primitive days and first invention of the unleavened kind, when from the wildness of nuts and meats men first reached the mildness and refinement of this diet, and travelling gradually down in my studies through that accidental souring of the dough which, it is supposed, taught the leavening process, and through the various fermentations thereafter, till I came to "good, sweet, wholesome bread," the staff of life. Leaven, which some deem the soul of bread, the *spiritus* which fills its cellular tissue, which is religiously preserved like the vestal fire —some precious bottleful, I suppose, first brought over in the *Mayflower,* did the business for America, and its influence is still rising, swelling, spreading, in cerealian billows over the land — this seed I regularly and faithfully procured from the village, till at length one morning I forgot the rules and scalded my yeast; by which accident I discovered that even this was not indispensable — for my discoveries were not by the synthetic but analytic process — and I have gladly omitted it since, though most housewives earnestly assured me that safe and wholesome bread without yeast might not be, and elderly people prophesied a speedy decay of the vital forces.

Yet I find it not to be an essential ingredient, and after going without it for a year am still in the land of the living; and I am glad to escape

the trivialness of carrying a bottleful in my pocket, which would sometimes pop and discharge its contents to my discomfiture. It is simpler and more respectable to omit it. Man is an animal who more than any other can adapt himself to all climates and circumstances. Neither did I put any salt, soda, or other acid or alkali, into my bread. It would seem that I made it according to the recipe which Marcus Porcius Cato gave about two centuries before Christ: "Panem depsticium sic facito. Manus mortariumque bene lavato. Farinam in mortarium indito, aquæ paulatim addito, subigitoque pulchre. Ubi bene subegeris, defingito, coquitoque sub testu." Which I take to mean — "Make kneaded bread thus: Wash your hands and trough well. Put the meal into the trough, add water gradually, and knead it thoroughly. When you have kneaded it well, mould it, and bake it under a cover;" that is, in a baking-kettle. Not a word about leaven. But I did not always use this staff of life. At one time, owing to the emptiness of my purse, I saw none of it for more than a month.

At a certain season of our life we are accustomed to consider every spot as the possible site of a house. I have thus surveyed the country on every side within a dozen miles of where I live. In imagination I have bought all the farms in succession, for all were to be bought, and I knew their price. I walked over each farmer's premises, tasted his wild apples, discoursed on husbandry with him, took his farm at his price, at any price, mortgaging it to him in my mind; even put a higher price on it — took everything but a

deed of it — took his word for his deed, for I dearly love to talk — cultivated it, and him too to some extent, I trust, and withdrew when I had enjoyed it long enough, leaving him to carry it on. This experience entitled me to be regarded as a sort of real-estate broker by my friends. Wherever I sat, there I might live, and the landscape radiated from me accordingly. What is a house but a *sedes,* a seat? — better if a country seat.

I discovered many a site for a house not likely to be soon improved, which some might have thought too far from the village, but to my eyes the village was too far from it. Well, there I might live, I said; and there I did live, for an hour, a summer and a winter life; saw how I could let the years run off, buffet the winter through, and see the spring come in. The future inhabitants of this region, wherever they may place their houses, may be sure that they have been anticipated. An afternoon sufficed to lay out the land into orchard, woodlot, and pasture, and to decide what fine oaks or pines should be left to stand before the door, and whence each blasted tree could be seen to the best advantage; and then I let it lie, fallow perchance, for a man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone.

My imagination carried me so far that I even had the refusal of several farms — the refusal was all I wanted — but I never got my fingers burned by actual possession. The nearest that I came to actual possession was when I bought the Hollowell place, and had begun to sort my seeds, and collected materials with which to make

a wheelbarrow to carry it on or off with; but before the owner gave me a deed of it, his wife — every man has such a wife — changed her mind and wished to keep it, and he offered me ten dollars to release him. Now, to speak the truth, I had but ten cents in the world, and it surpassed my arithmetic to tell, if I was that man who had ten cents, or who had a farm, or ten dollars, or all together. However, I let him keep the ten dollars and the farm too, for I had carried it far enough; or rather, to be generous, I sold him the farm for just what I gave for it, and, as he was not a rich man, made him a present of ten dollars, and still had my ten cents, and seeds, and materials for a wheelbarrow left. I found thus that I had been a rich man without any damage to my poverty. But I retained the landscape, and have since annually carried off what it yielded without a wheelbarrow. With respect to landscapes, —

> "I am monarch of all I *survey*,
> My right there is none to dispute."

I have frequently seen a poet withdraw, having enjoyed the most valuable part of a farm, while the crusty farmer supposed that he had got a few wild apples only. Why, the owner does not know it for many years when a poet has put his farm in rhyme, the most admirable kind of invisible fence, has fairly impounded it, milked it, skimmed it, and got all the cream, and left the farmer only the skimmed milk.

The real attractions of the Hollowell farm, to me, were: first, its complete retirement, being about two miles from the village, half a mile from

the nearest neighbor, and separated from the highway by a broad field; secondly, its bounding on the river, which the owner said protected it by its fogs from frosts in the spring, though that was nothing to me; thirdly, the gray color and ruinous state of the house and barn, and the dilapidated fences, which put such an interval between me and the last occupant; fourthly, the hollow and lichen-covered apple trees, gnawed by rabbits, showing what kind of neighbors I should have; but fifthly, and above all, the recollection I had of it from my earliest voyages up the river, when the house was concealed behind a dense grove of red maples, which then stood between it and the water, — through which I heard the house-dog bark. Though it afforded no western prospect, I was in haste to buy it, before the proprietor finished getting out some rocks, cutting down the hollow apple trees, and grubbing up some young birches which had sprung up in the pasture; or, in short, had made any more of his improvements.

To enjoy these advantages I was ready to carry it on; like Atlas, to take the world on my shoulders — I have never heard what compensation he received for that — and do all those things which had no other motive or excuse but that I might pay for it and be unmolested in my possession of it; for I knew all the while that it would yield the most abundant crop of the kind I wanted if I could only afford to let it alone. But it turned out as I have said.

All that I could say, then, with respect to farming on a large scale (I have always cultivated a garden), was, that I had had my seeds ready.

Many think that seeds improve with age. I have no doubt that time discriminates between the good and the bad; and when at last I shall plant, I shall be less likely to be disappointed. But I would say to my fellows, once for all, as long as possible live free and uncommitted. It makes but little difference whether you are committed to a farm or a county jail.

Old Cato, whose "De Re Rustica" is my "Cultivator," says: —

> Prædium quam parare cogitabis, sic in animo habeto, uti ne cupide emas, neve opera tua parcas visere, et ne satis habeas semel circumire. Quoties ibis, toties magis placebit, quod bonum erit.

The learned Oxford translator — the only translation I have seen — makes sheer nonsense of the passage. When you think of getting a farm, turn it thus in your mind, not to buy greedily, nor spare your pains to look at it, and do not think it enough to go round it once. The oftener you go there the more it will please you, if it is good. I think I shall not buy greedily, but go round and round it as long as I live, and be buried in it first, that it may please me the more at last.

The present was my first experiment of this kind, which I purpose to describe more at length; for convenience, putting the experience of two years into one. As I have said, I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up.

When first I took up my abode in the woods,

that is, began to spend my nights as well as days there, which, by accident, was on Independence Day, on the 4th of July, 1845, my house was not finished for winter, but was merely a defence against the rain, without plastering or chimney; the walls being of rough weather-stained boards, with wide chinks, which made it cool at night. The upright white hewn studs and freshly planed door and window casings gave it a clean and airy look, especially in the morning, when its timbers were saturated with dew, so that I fancied that by noon some sweet gum would exude from them. To my imagination it retained throughout the day more or less of this auroral character, reminding me of a certain house on a mountain which I had visited the year before. This was an airy and unplastered cabin, fit to entertain a travelling god, and where a goddess might trail her garments. I thought the winds which passed over my dwelling were such as sweep over the ridges of mountains, bearing the broken strains, or celestial parts only, of terrestrial music. The morning wind forever blows, the poem of creation is uninterrupted; but few are the ears that hear it. Olympus is but the outside of the earth everywhere.

The only house I had been the owner of before, if I except a boat, was a tent, which I used occasionally when making excursions in the summer, and this is still rolled up in my garret; but the boat, after passing from hand to hand, has gone down the stream of time.

With this more substantial shelter about me, I had made some progress toward settling in the

world. This frame, so slightly clad, was a sort of crystallization around me, and reacted on the builder. It was suggestive somewhat as a picture in outline.[1] I did not need to go outdoors to take

[1] This passage appears in the original MS. in quite a different and more complete form: "With its frame so slightly clad, as in June, 1845, my house seemed like a picture in outline, a rudimental airy and primitive hall, — a crystallization around me. It reminded me of some mountain houses I had seen, which had this fresh auroral atmosphere about them; the rudiment of something at least other than a carpenter's bill. From my village house to this was a transition as from a close prison to an open cage swung in a grove. Nay, I imbibed the influence of Nature with as little alloy as a bird in its nest amid the foliage. A pure temple of a house, which one would enter as naturally and gratefully as he would go under the shade of a tree; fit to adorn a mountain's brow, and entertain a travelling god, and where a goddess might trail her garments.

"When I looked out on the face of the pond, too, it reminded me of a tarn I had seen high up on the side of a mountain; and so the whole region where I lived seemed more elevated than it actually was. I had seen the mountain lake in the gray of the morning, draped in mist, which was suspended in low wreaths from the dead willows and bare firs, that stood here and there in the water. As the sun arose, I saw it throwing off its nightly clothing of mist; and here and there, by degrees, its soft ripple or its smooth reflecting surface was revealed. The white mists, like ghosts, were stealthily withdrawing in every direction into the woods, as at the breaking up of some nocturnal conventicles.

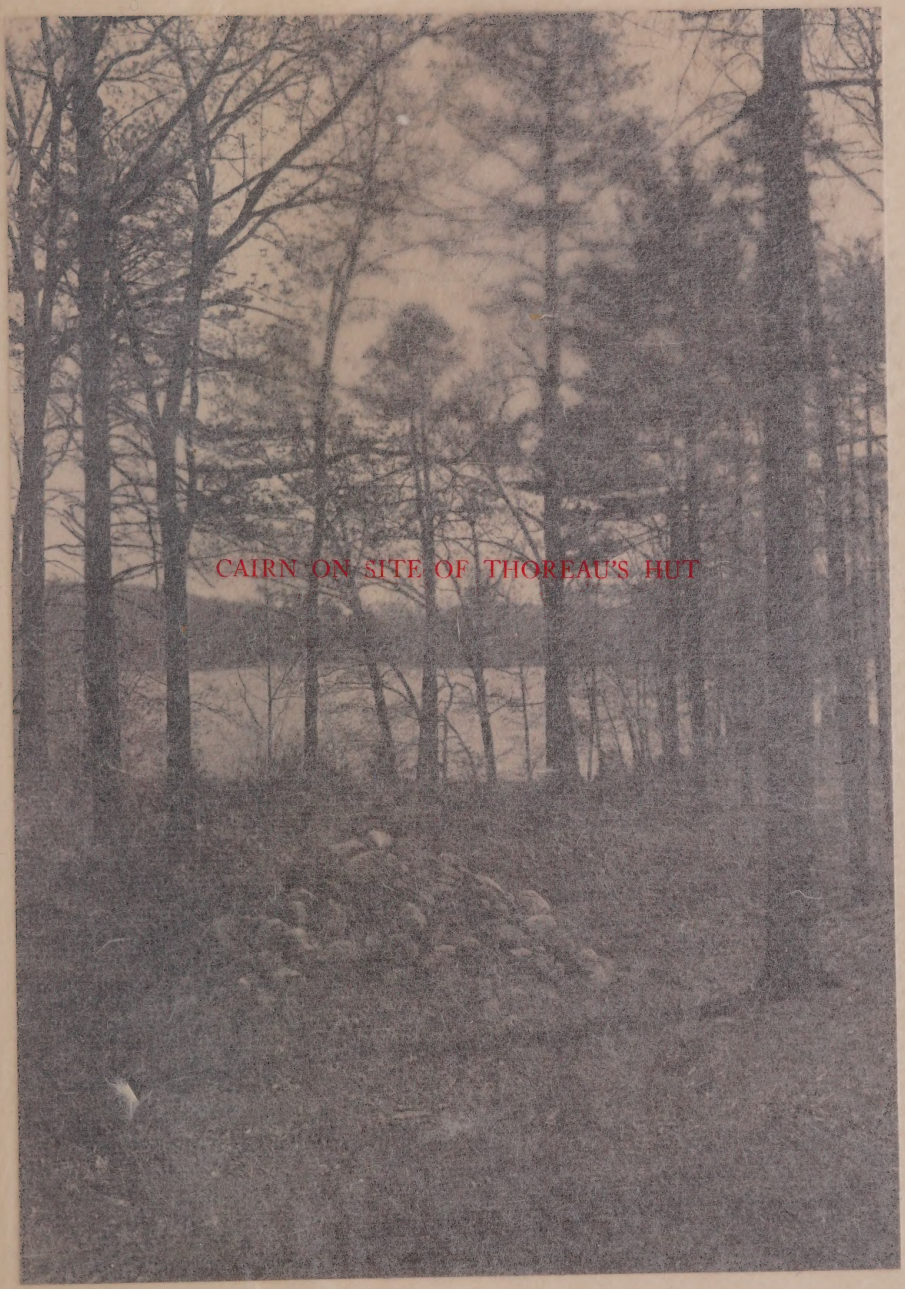
"But why should I find anything to welcome me in such a nook as this, — this faint reflection, this dim watery eye, — where in some angle of the hills, the woods meet the water's edge and a gray tarn lies sleeping? I had lodged at the house of a saw-miller on the Kauterskill mountains the previous summer, — high up as the 'Pine

the air, for the atmosphere within had lost none of its freshness. It was not so much within doors as behind a door where I sat, even in the rainiest weather. The Harivansa says, " An abode without birds is like a meat without seasoning." Such was not my abode, for I found myself suddenly neighbor to the birds; not by having imprisoned one, but having caged myself near them. I was not only nearer to some of those which commonly frequent the garden and the orchard, but to those wilder and more thrilling songsters of the forest which never, or rarely, serenade a villager — the woodthrush, the veery, the scarlet tanager, the field-sparrow, the whippoorwill, and many others.

I was seated by the shore of a beautiful pond, about a mile and a half south of the village of Concord and somewhat higher than it, in the midst of an extensive wood between that town and

Orchard,' in the blueberry and raspberry region, which had this ambrosial and auroral character. He was the miller of the Kauterskill Falls, and his family were clean and wholesome people, like the house. The latter was not plastered, but only lathed, and the inner doors were not hung. It was high-placed, airy and perfumed, — so high that only the winds that swept over the village of the Kauterskills (bearing the broken strains, the waifs and accompaniments of so concordant a music) passed through it."

This excursion to the Berkshire mountains, the Catskills, and the Hudson river, the story of which was partly told in *The Week,* was made in company with Ellery Channing in August, 1844, — Channing coming up from New York, where he was then living, and joining his friend at the foot of Greylock in the early morning. It is more particularly mentioned in *Familiar Letters* (edition of 1906), page 407. — F. B. S.



CAIRN ON SITE OF THOREAU'S HUT

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Lincoln, and about two miles south of that our only field known to fame, Concord battle-ground; but I was so low in the woods that the opposite shore, half a mile off, like the rest, covered with wood, was my most distant horizon. During the first week my thoughts were so leavened with expectation that the whole region where I lived seemed more elevated than it actually was. Whenever I looked out on the pond, it impressed me like a tarn high up on the side of a mountain, its bottom far above the surface of other lakes, and, as the sun arose, I saw it throwing off its nightly clothing of mist, and here and there, by degrees, its soft ripples or its smooth reflecting surface was revealed, while the mists, like ghosts, were stealthily withdrawing in every direction into the woods, as at the breaking up of some nocturnal conventicle. The very dew seemed to hang upon the trees later into the day than usual, as on the sides of mountains.

This small lake was of most value as a neighbor in the intervals of a gentle rain-storm in August, when, both air and water being perfectly still, but the sky overcast, mid-afternoon had all the serenity of evening, and the woodthrush sang around, and was heard from shore to shore. A lake like this is never smoother than at such a time; and the clear portion of the air above it being shallow and darkened by clouds, the water, full of light and reflections, becomes a lower heaven itself so much the more important.

From a hill-top near by, where the wood had been recently cut off, there was a pleasing vista southward across the pond, through a wide in-

dentation in the hills which form the shore there, where their opposite sides sloping toward each other suggested a stream flowing out in that direction through a wooded valley; but stream there was none, except in my imagination. That way I looked between and over the near green hills to some distant and higher ones in the horizon, tinged with blue. That was the kind of coin I saw through this crack in my treasure-box. Indeed, by standing on tip-toe I could catch a glimpse of some of the peaks of the still bluer and more distant mountain ranges in the northwest, those true-blue coins from heaven's own mint, and also of some portion of the village. But in other directions, even from this point, I could not see over or beyond the woods which surrounded me.

It is well to have some water in your neighborhood, to give buoyancy to and float the earth. One value even of the smallest well is, that when you look into it you see that earth is not continent but insular. This is as important as that it keeps butter cool. When I looked across the pond from this peak toward the Sudbury meadows, which in time of flood I distinguished elevated perhaps by a mirage in their seething valley, like a coin in a basin, all the earth beyond the pond appeared like a thin crust insulated and floated even by this small sheet of intervening water, and I was reminded that this on which I dwelt was but *dry land.*

Though the view from my door was still more contracted, I did not feel crowded or confined in the least. There was pasture enough for my

imagination. The low shrub-oak plateau to which the opposite shore arose, stretched away toward the prairies of the West and the steppes of Tartary, affording ample room for all the roving families of men. "There are none happy in the world but beings who enjoy freely a vast horizon," said Damodara, when his herds required new and larger pastures.

We are wont to imagine rare and delectable places in some remote and more celestial corner of the system, behind the Constellation of Cassiopeia's Chair, far from noise and disturbance. I discovered that my house actually had its site in such a withdrawn, but forever new and unprofaned, part of the universe. If it were worth the while to settle in those parts near to the Pleiades or the Hyades, to Aldebaran or Altair, then I was really there, or at an equal remoteness from the life which I had left behind, dwindled and twinkling with as fine a ray to my nearest neighbor, and to be seen only in moonless nights by him. Such was the part of creation where I had squatted —

> "There was a shepherd that did live,
> And held his thoughts as high
> As were the mounts whereon his flocks
> Did hourly feed him by."

What should we think of the shepherd's life if his flocks always wandered to higher pastures than his thoughts?

Every morning was a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and I may say innocence, with Nature herself. I have been as

sincere a worshipper of Aurora as the Greeks. I got up early and bathed in the pond: that was a religious exercise, and one of the best things which I did. They say that characters were engraven on the bathing tub of king Tching-thang to this effect: "Renew thyself completely each day; do it again and again, and forever again." I can understand that.

Morning brings back the heroic ages. I was as much affected by the faint hum of a mosquito making its invisible and unimaginable tour through my apartment at earliest dawn, when I was sitting with door and windows open, as I could be by any trumpet that ever sang of fame. It was Homer's requiem; itself an Iliad and Odyssey in the air, singing its own wrath and wanderings. There was something infinite and cosmical about it; a standing advertisement, till forbidden, of the everlasting vigor and fertility of the world.

The morning, which is the most memorable season of the day, is the awakening hour. Then there is least somnolence to us; and for an hour, at least, some part of us appears to awake which slumbers all the rest of the day and night. Little is to be expected of that day, if it can be called a day, to which we are not awakened by our Genius, but by the mechanical nudgings of some servitor, are not awakened by our own newly acquired force and aspirations from within, accompanied by the undulations of celestial music, instead of factory bells, and a fragrance filling the air — awakened to a higher life than we fell asleep from; and thus the darkness bear its

fruit, and prove itself to be good, no less than the light.

That man who does not believe that each day contains an earlier, more sacred, and auroral hour than he has yet profaned, has despaired of life, and is pursuing a descending and darkening way. After a partial cessation of his sensuous life, the soul of man, or its organs rather, are reinvigorated each day, and his Genius tries again what noble life it can make.

All memorable events, I should say, transpire in morning time and in a morning atmosphere. The Vedas say, "All intelligences awake with the morning." Poetry and art, and the fairest and most memorable of the actions of men date from such an hour. All poets and heroes, like Memnon, are the children of Aurora, and emit their music at sunrise. To him whose elastic and vigorous thought keeps pace with the sun, the day is a perpetual morning. It matters not what the clocks say or the attitudes and labors of men.

Morning is when I am awake and there is a dawn in me. Moral reform and improvement are the effort to throw off sleep. Why is it that men give so poor an account of their day if they have not been slumbering? They are not such poor calculators. If they had not been overcome with drowsiness they would have performed something. The millions are awake enough for physical labor; but only one in a million is awake enough for effective intellectual exertion, only one in a hundred millions to a poetic or divine life. To be awake is to be alive. I have never yet met

a man who was quite awake. How could I have looked him in the face?

We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us in our soundest sleep. I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor. It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look, which morally we can do.

To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts. Every man is tasked to make his life, even in its details, worthy of the contemplation of his most elevated and critical hour. If we refused, or rather used up, such paltry information as we get, the oracles would distinctly inform us how this might be done.

Still we live meanly, like ants; though the fable tells us that we were long ago changed into men; like pigmies we fight with cranes; it is error upon error, and clout upon clout, and our best virtue has for its occasion a superfluous and evitable wretchedness.

Our life is frittered away by detail. Its dish consists almost entirely of "fixings," and very little of the chickens' meat.[1] An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers,

[1] This passage, which was omitted from the printed editions, alludes to a Western colloquialism of that day, — "chicken fixings," for fricasseed chicken. — F. B. S.

or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb nail. In the midst of this chopping sea of civilized life, such are the clouds and storms and quicksands and thousand-and-one items to be allowed for, that a man has to live, if he would not founder and go to the bottom and not make his port at all, by dead reckoning, and he must be a great calculator indeed who succeeds.

Simplify, simplify! Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, five; and reduce other things in proportion. Our life is like a German Confederacy, made up of petty states, with its boundary forever fluctuating, so that even a German cannot tell you how it is bounded at any moment. The nation itself, with all its so-called internal improvements, which, by the way, are all external and superficial, is just such an unwieldy and overgrown establishment, encumbered with furniture and tripped up by its own traps, ruined by luxury and heedless expense, by want of calculation and a worthy aim, as the million households in the land; and the only cure for it as for them is in a rigid economy, a stern and more than Spartan simplicity of life and elevation of purpose. It lives too fast. There are expenses of the establishment, and they are wont to be very serious, even long before anything is established. A platform for orators is at once erected,

and that costs incalculable sums. I have noticed that birds which fly in flocks waste a good deal of time in chattering. Judging by the amount that has been spoken and written about the Fourier System (for instance), — the interminable discussion even to the minutest details of the cellar and the garret, — one would suppose that it had now been in operation for a hundred years. But I have yet to learn that a single institution, entirely on Fourier's plan, is anywhere fairly under weigh.[1]

Men think that it is essential that the *Nation* have commerce, and export ice, and talk through a telegraph, and ride thirty miles an hour, without a doubt, whether *they* do or not; but whether we should live like baboons or like men, is a little uncertain. If we do not get our sleepers, and forge rails, and devote days and nights to the work, but go to tinkering upon our *lives* to improve *them,* who will build railroads? And if railroads are not built, how shall we get to heaven in season? When I first got a cinder in my eye, I suspected that I was not going to heaven. But if we stay at home and mind our business, who will want railroads? We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us. Did you ever think what

[1] This, which was true in 1847, when Thoreau left Walden, was no longer true in 1854, when his book was published. Brook Farm had not been wholly Fourierite when it collapsed in 1850, although at the gradual introduction of Fourierism in 1845, George Curtis, Minott Pratt, and others left the West Roxbury Community and migrated to Concord, while Thoreau was still amid his "blackberry pastures," as Curtis called his region.

those sleepers are that underlie the railroad? Each one is a man, an Irishman, or a Yankee man. The rails are laid on them, and they are covered with sand, and the cars run smoothly over them. They are sound sleepers, I assure you. And every few years a new lot is laid down and run over; so that, if some have the pleasure of riding on a rail, others have the misfortune to be ridden upon. And when they run over a man that is walking in his sleep, a supernumerary sleeper in the wrong position, and wake him up, they suddenly stop the cars, and make a hue and cry about it, as if this were an exception. I am glad to know that it takes a gang of men for every five miles to keep the sleepers down and level in their beds as it is, for this is a sign that they may sometimes get up again.

Why should we live with such hurry and waste of life? We are determined to be starved before we are hungry. Men say that a stitch in time saves nine, and so they take a thousand stitches today to save nine tomorrow. As for *work,* we have n't any of any consequence. We have the Saint Vitus' dance, and cannot possibly keep our heads still. Why, if I should only give a few pulls at the parish bell-rope, as for a fire, that is, without setting the bell, there is hardly a man on his farm in the outskirts of Concord, notwithstanding that press of engagements which was his excuse so many times this morning, nor a boy, nor a woman, I might almost say, but would forsake all and follow that sound, and not, as we must confess, if we are honest, to do a deed of charity or neighborliness and save property from

the flames; but, if we will confess the truth, much more to see it burn, since burn it must, and we, be it known, did not set it on fire, — or to see it put out, and have a hand in it, if that is done as handsomely; yes, even if it were the parish church itself.

Hardly a man takes a half hour's nap after dinner, but when he wakes he holds up his head and asks, "What's the news?" as if the rest of mankind had stood his sentinels. Some give directions to be waked every half hour, doubtless for no other purpose; and then, to pay for it, they tell what they have dreamed. After a night's sleep the news is as indispensable as the breakfast. "Pray tell me anything new that has happened to a man anywhere on this globe," — and he reads it over his coffee and rolls, the latest intelligence by telegraph, — that a man has had his eyes gouged out this morning on the Wachito River; never dreaming the while that he lives in the dark unfathomed mammoth cave of this world, and has but the rudiment of an eye himself.

For my part, I could easily do without the post-office. I think that there are very few important communications made through it. To speak deliberately and critically, I never received more than one or two letters in my life — I wrote this some years ago — that were worth the postage, much less the reading. The penny-post is, commonly, an institution through which you seriously offer a man that penny for his thoughts which is so often safely offered in jest. And I am sure that I never read any memorable news in a newspaper. Though I confess that in spirit

I am too often ready to admit, like the rest of mankind, that the smallest favor in either of these forms will be gratefully received.

If we read of one man robbed, or murdered, or killed by accident, or one house burned, or one vessel wrecked, or one steamboat blown up, or one cow run over on the Western Railroad, or one mad dog killed, or one lot of grasshoppers in the winter, — we never need read of another. One is enough. If you are acquainted with the principle, what do you care for a myriad instances and applications? To a philosopher all *news,* as it is called, is gossip, and they who edit and read it are old women over their tea. Uncle Sam is a man who presumes to tell you each day how many times he has stubbed his toes. No doubt such accidents do happen to a man, but let him wait at least till he stubs his nose before he bores his neighbors with the news.[1] Yet not a few are greedy after this gossip. There was such a rush, as I hear, the other day at one of the offices to learn the foreign news by the last arrival, that several large squares of plate glass belonging to the establishment were broken by the pressure, — news which I seriously think a ready wit might write a twelvemonth or twelve years beforehand with sufficient accuracy.

[1] This interesting passage about newspapers and the Post Office is abbreviated in the printed texts of Walden. The text is here restored to the form of the original manuscript. As a matter of fact, few residents of Concord frequented the Post Office more punctually, or read the newspapers (particularly the New York *Tribune*) more eagerly than Thoreau. — F. B. S.

As for Spain, for instance, if you know how to throw in Don Carlos and the Infanta, and Don Pedro and Seville and Granada, from time to time in the right proportions, — they may have changed the names a little since I saw the papers, — and serve up a bull-fight when other entertainments fail, it will be true to the letter, and give us as good an idea of the exact state or ruin of things in Spain as the most succinct and lucid reports under this head in the newspapers: and as for England, almost the last significant scrap of news from that quarter was the revolution of 1649; and if you have learned the history of her crops for an average year, you never need attend to that thing again, unless your speculations are of a merely pecuniary character. If one may judge who rarely looks into the newspapers, nothing new does ever happen in foreign parts, a French revolution not excepted.[1]

What news! how much more important to know what that is which was never old! "Kieou-he-yu (great dignitary of the state of Wei) sent a man to Khoung-tseu to know his news. Khoung-tseu caused the messenger to be seated near him, and questioned him in these terms: 'What is your master doing?' The messenger answered with respect: 'My master desires to diminish the number of his faults, but he

[1] The following by Thoreau appears as a footnote in the original MS.: —

"This was written before the last (1848) Revolution broke out; but a revolution in France might be expected any day; and it would be as easy to tell where it would end, before it was born, as after it was five years old."

cannot come to the end of them.' The messenger being gone, the philosopher remarked: 'What a worthy messenger! What a worthy messenger!'"

The preacher, instead of vexing the ears of drowsy farmers on their day of rest at the end of the week — for Sunday always seemed to me like the fit conclusion of an ill-spent week, and not the fresh and brave beginning of a new one, — with this one other draggle-tail of a sermon, should shout with thundering voice, — "PAUSE! Avast! Why so seeming fast, but deadly slow?"

Shams and delusions are esteemed for soundest truths, while reality is fabulous. If men would steadily observe realities only, and not allow themselves to be deluded, life, to compare it with such things as we know, would be like a fairy tale and the Arabian Nights' Entertainments.

If we respected only what is inevitable and has a right to be, music and poetry would resound along the streets. When we are unhurried and wise, we perceive that only great and worthy things have any permanent and absolute existence, — that petty fears and petty pleasures are but the shadow of the reality. This is always exhilarating and sublime. By closing the eyes and slumbering, and consenting to be deceived by shows, men establish and confirm their daily life of routine and habit everywhere, which still is built on purely illusory foundations.

Children, who play life, discern its true law and relations more clearly than men, who fail to live it worthily, but who think that they are wiser

by experience, that is, by failure. I have read in a Hindoo book, that "there was a king's son, who, being expelled in infancy from his native city, was brought up by a forester, and, growing up to maturity in that state, imagined himself to belong to the barbarous race with which he lived. One of his father's ministers having discovered him, revealed to him what he was, and the misconception of his character was removed, and he knew himself to be a prince. So soul," continues the Hindoo philosopher, "from the circumstances in which it is placed, mistakes its own character, until the truth is revealed to it by some holy teacher, and then it knows itself to be *Brahme*."

I perceive that we inhabitants of New England live this mean life that we do because our vision does not penetrate the surface of things. We think that that *is* which *appears* to be. If a man should walk through this city and see only the reality, where, think you, would your State Street [1] go to? If he should give us an account of the realities he beheld there, we should not recognize the place in his description. Look at a church, or a courthouse, or a jail, or a shop, or a dwelling-house, and say what that thing really is before a true gaze, and they would all go to pieces in your account of them.

Men esteem truth remote, in the outskirts of the system, behind the farthest star, before Adam and after the last man. In eternity there is in-

[1] It may be inferred that this passage, — which now appears in a slightly different form from that in which it has heretofore been printed, — was written, or at least read, in Boston. — F. B. S.

deed something true and sublime. But all these times and places and occasions are now and here. God himself culminates in the present moment, and will never be more divine in the lapse of all the ages. And we are enabled to apprehend at all what is sublime and noble only by the perpetual instilling and drenching of the reality that surrounds us.

The universe constantly and obediently answers to our conceptions; whether we travel fast or slow, the track is laid for us. Let us spend our lives in conceiving then. The poet or the artist never yet had so fair and noble a design but some of his posterity at least could accomplish it.

Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature, and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls on the rails. Let us rise early and fast, or break fast, gently and without perturbation; let company come and let company go, let the bells ring and the children cry, — determined to make a day of it. Why should we knock under and go with the stream? Let us not be upset and overwhelmed in that terrible rapid and whirlpool called a dinner, situated in the meridian shallows. Weather this danger and you are safe, for the rest of the way is down hill. With unrelaxed nerves, with morning vigor, sail by it, looking another way, tied to the mast like Ulysses. If the engine whistles, let it whistle till it is hoarse for its pains. If the bell rings, why should we run? We will consider what kind of music they are like.

Let us settle ourselves, and work and wedge

our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance, that alluvion which covers the globe, through Paris and London, through New York and Boston and Concord, through church and state, through poetry and philosophy and religion, till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place, which we can call *reality,* and say, This is, and no mistake; and then begin, having a *point d'appui,* below freshet and frost and fire, a place where you might found a wall or a state, or set a lamp-post safely, or perhaps a gauge, not a Nilometer, but a Real-ometer, that future ages might know how deep a freshet of shams and appearances had gathered from time to time.

If you stand right fronting and face to face to a fact, you will see the sun glimmer on both its surfaces, as if it were a cimeter, and feel its sweet edge dividing you through the heart and marrow, and so you will happily conclude your mortal career. Be it life or death, we crave only reality. If we are really dying, let us hear the rattle in our throats and feel cold in the extremities; if we are alive, let us go about our business.

Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current glides away, but eternity remains. I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars. I cannot count one. I know not the first letter of the alphabet. I have always been regretting that I was not as wise as the day I was born. The intellect is a cleaver; it discerns

and splits and rifts its way into the secret of things. I do not wish to be any more busy with my hands than is necessary. My head is my hands and my feet. I feel all my best faculties concentrated in it. My instinct tells me that my head is an organ for burrowing, as some creatures use their snout and fore-paws, and with it I would mine and burrow my way through these hills. I think that the richest vein is somewhere hereabouts; so by the divining rod and thin rising vapors I judge; and here I will begin to mine.

CHAPTER II — ECONOMY

I WOULD fain say something, not so much concerning the Chinese and the Sandwich Islanders, as concerning you who read these pages, who are said to live in New England, — something about your condition, especially your outward condition or circumstances in this world, in this town; what it is, whether it is necessary that it be as bad as it is, whether it cannot be improved as well as not.

I have travelled a good deal in Concord; and everywhere, in shops, and offices, and fields, the inhabitants have appeared to me to be doing penance in a thousand remarkable ways. What I have heard of Brahmins sitting exposed to four fires and looking in the face of the sun, or hanging suspended, with their heads downward, over flames; or looking at the heavens over their shoulders, "until it becomes impossible for them to resume their natural position, while from the twist of the neck nothing but liquids can pass into the stomach;" or dwelling, chained for life, at the foot of a tree; or measuring with their bodies, like caterpillars, the breadth of vast empires; or standing on one leg on the tops of pillars — even these forms of conscious penance are hardly more incredible and astonishing than the scenes which I daily witness. The twelve labors

of Hercules were trifling in comparison with those which my neighbors have undertaken; for they were only twelve, and had an end; but I could never see that these men slew or captured any monster or finished any labor. They have no friend Iolaus to burn with a hot iron the root of the hydra's head, but as soon as one head is crushed, two spring up.

I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle, and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of. Better if they had been born in the open pasture and suckled by a wolf, that they might have seen with clearer eyes what field they were called to labor in. Who made them serfs of the soil? Why should they eat their sixty acres, when man is condemned to eat only his peck of dirt? Why should they begin digging their graves as soon as they are born? They have got to live a man's life, pushing all these things before them, and get on as well as they can.

How many a poor immortal soul have I met well-nigh crushed and smothered under its load, creeping down the road of life, pushing before it a barn seventy-five feet by forty, its Augean stables never cleansed, and a hundred acres of land, tillage, mowing, pasture, and wood-lot! The portionless, who struggle with no such unnecessary inherited encumbrances, find it labor enough to subdue and cultivate a few cubic feet of flesh.

Most men, even in this comparatively free country, through mere ignorance and mistake,

are so occupied with the fictitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them. Their fingers, from excessive toil, are too clumsy and tremble too much for that. The finest qualities of our nature are as difficult to preserve as the down on a peach. Yet we do not treat ourselves nor one another thus tenderly.

Actually, the laboring man has not leisure for a true integrity day by day; he cannot afford to sustain the manliest relations to men; his labor would be depreciated in the market. He has no time to be anything but a machine. How can he remember well his ignorance — which his growth requires — who has so often to use his knowledge? We should feed and clothe him gratuitously sometimes, and recruit him with our cordials, before we judge of him.

Some of you, we all know, are poor, find it hard to live, are sometimes, as it were, gasping for breath. I have no doubt that some of you who read this book are unable to pay for all the dinners you have actually eaten, or for the coats and shoes which are fast wearing or are already worn out, and have come to this page to spend borrowed or stolen time, robbing your creditors of an hour. It is very evident what mean and sneaking lives many of you live (for my sight has been whetted by experience); always on the limits,[1] trying to get into business and trying to get out of debt; a very ancient slough, called by the Latins *æs alienum,* another's brass, for some of their coins

[1] The jail limits for imprisoned debtors. — F. B. S.

were made of brass; still living, and dying, and buried by this other's brass; always promising to pay, promising to pay, tomorrow, and dying to-day, insolvent; seeking to curry favor, to get custom, by how many modes, only not state-prison offences; lying, flattering, voting, contracting yourselves into a nutshell of civility, or dilating into an atmosphere of thin and vaporous generosity, that you may persuade your neighbor to let you make his shoes, or his hat, or his coat, or his carriage, or import his groceries for him; making yourself sick, that you may lay up something against a sick day, something to be tucked away in an old chest, or in a stocking behind the plastering; or, more safely, in the brick bank; no matter where, no matter how much or how little.

I sometimes wonder that we can be so frivolous, I may almost say, as to attend to the gross but somewhat foreign form of servitude called Negro Slavery; there are so many keen and subtle masters that enslave both North and South. It is hard to have a Southern overseer; it is worse to have a Northern one; but worst of all when you are the slave-driver of yourself.

Talk of a divinity in man! Look at the teamster on the highway, wending to market by day or night! Is he a son of the morning, fearless because immortal — greeting the sun and stars as his fellows, and bounding with youthful and elastic step over his mother earth? does any divinity stir within him? He rolls out of his cradle into a Tom and Jerry and goes at once to look after his team; his highest duty to fodder and water his horses without standing agape at his position.

What are life immortal and the destiny of man to him, compared with the shipping interests? Does not he drive for Squire Make-a-stir? How god-like, how immortal, is he? See how he cowers and sneaks, how vaguely and indefinitely all the day he fears, not being immortal nor divine, but the slave and prisoner of his own opinion of himself, a fame won by his own deeds.

Public opinion is a weak tyrant compared with our own private opinion. What a man thinks of himself, that it is which determines, or rather indicates, his fate. Self-emancipation even in the West Indian provinces of the fancy and imagination — what Wilberforce is there to bring that about? Think, also, of the ladies of the land weaving toilet cushions against the last day, not to betray too keen an interest in their fates! As if you could kill time without injuring eternity.

The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation. From the desperate city you go into the desperate country, and have to console yourself with the bravery of minks and muskrats. A stereotyped but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind. There is no play in them, for this comes after work. But it is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things.

When we consider what, to use the words of the catechism, is the chief end of man, and what are the true necessaries and means of life, it appears as if men had deliberately chosen the common mode of living because they preferred it to any other. But not so; they think there is no

other choice. But alert and healthy natures remember that the sun rose clear.

It is never too late to give up our prejudices. No way of thinking or doing, however ancient, can be trusted without proof.

What everybody echoes, or in silence passes by, as true today may turn out to be falsehood tomorrow, — mere smoke of opinion, falling back in cinders, which some had trusted for a cloud that would sprinkle fertilizing rain on their fields. What old people say you cannot do you try and find that you can. Old deeds for old people, and new deeds for new ones. Old people can hardly walk up stairs. In Typee the young men can walk up a smooth cocoanut tree, sixty feet high and bare of branches. Old people did not know enough once, perchance, to fetch fresh fuel to keep the fire a-going; new people put a little dry wood under a pot, and are whirled round the globe with the speed of birds, in a way to kill old people, as the phrase is. Age is no better, hardly so well, qualified for an instructor as youth, for it has not profited so much as it has lost. One may almost doubt if the wisest man has learned anything of absolute value by living. Practically, the old have no very important advice to give the young; their own experience has been so partial, and their lives have been such miserable failures, for private reasons, as they must believe; and it may be that they have some faith left which belies that experience, and they are only less young than they were. I have lived some thirty years on this planet, and I have yet to hear the first syllable of valuable or even earnest advice from my seniors.

They have told me nothing, and probably cannot tell me anything to the purpose. Here is life, an experiment to a great extent untried by me; but it does not avail me that they have tried it. If I have any experience which I think valuable, I am sure to reflect that this my Mentors said nothing about.

One farmer says to me, "You cannot live on vegetable food solely, for it furnishes nothing to make bones with;" and so he religiously devotes a part of his day to supplying his system with the raw material of bone; walking all the while he talks behind his oxen, which, with vegetable-made bones, jerk him and his lumbering plough along in spite of every obstacle. Some things are really necessaries of life in some circles, the most helpless and diseased, which in others are luxuries merely, and in others still are entirely unknown.

The whole ground of human life seems to some to have been gone over by their predecessors, both the heights and the valleys, and all things to have been cared for. According to Evelyn, "the wise Solomon prescribed ordinances for the very distances of trees; and the Roman prætors have decided how often you may go into your neighbor's land to gather the acorns which fall on it without trespass, and what share belongs to that neighbor." Hippocrates has even left directions how we should cut our nails; that is, even with the ends of the fingers, neither shorter nor longer. Undoubtedly the very tedium and ennui which presume to have exhausted the variety and the joys of life are as old as Adam.

But man's capacities have never been measured; nor are we to judge of what he can do by any precedents, so little has been tried. Whatever have been thy failures hitherto, "be not afflicted, my child, for who shall assign to thee what thou hast left undone?"

We might try our lives by a thousand simple tests; as, for instance, that the same sun which ripens my beans illumines at once a system of earths like ours. If I had remembered this it would have prevented some mistakes. This was not the light in which I hoed them. The stars are the apexes of what wonderful triangles! What distant and different beings in the various mansions of the universe are contemplating the same one at the same moment! The departing and the arriving spirit, — the joyful and the sad, — the innocent and happy child and the melancholy suicide, — the northern farmer and the southern slave.[1]

Nature and human life are as various as our several constitutions. Who shall say what prospect life offers to another? Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other's eyes for an instant? We should live in all the ages of the world in an hour; aye, in all the

[1] These are trivial instances. How many yet more distant inhabitants of our universe may be contemplating yonder fine twinkling star, which I behold at the same moment! The eye of Omniscience, — an eye in Orion, an eye in Lyra. There is the possibility of being thus related to the whole by our lives, or of remaining more and more an isolated particle in the universe. [*Footnote by Thoreau, omitted in the printed editions.*]

worlds of the ages. History, Poetry, Mythology! — I know of no reading of another's experience so startling and informing as this would be.

The greater part of what my neighbors call good I believe in my soul to be bad, and if I repent of anything, it is very likely to be my good behavior. What demon possessed me that I behaved so well? You may say the wisest thing you can, old man, — you who have lived seventy years, not without honor of a kind, — I hear an irresistible voice which invites me away from all that. One generation abandons the enterprises of another like stranded vessels.

I think that we may safely trust a good deal more than we do.

We may waive just so much care of ourselves as we honestly bestow elsewhere. Nature is as well adapted to our weakness as to our strength. The incessant anxiety and strain of some is a well-nigh incurable form of disease. Suppose we choose the better path and fail, whose failure is it? We are made to exaggerate the importance of what work we do; and yet how much is not done by us! or, what if we had been taken sick? How vigilant we are! determined not to live by faith if we can avoid it; all the day long on the alert, at night we unwillingly say our prayers and commit ourselves to uncertainties. So thoroughly and sincerely are we compelled to live, reverencing our life, and denying the possibility of change. This is the only way, we say, but there are as many ways as there can be radii drawn from one centre. All change is a miracle to contemplate; but it is a miracle that is taking place

every instant. Confucius said, " To know that we know what we know, and that we do not know what we do not know, — that is true knowledge." When one man has reduced a fact of the imagination to be a fact of the understanding, I foresee that all men will at length establish their lives on that basis.[1]

Let us consider for a moment what all this trouble and anxiety which I have referred to is about, and how much it is indispensable that we be troubled, or at least careful. I think it would be some advantage to live a primitive and frontier life, though in the midst of an outward civilization, if only to learn what are after all the gross necessaries of life, as they are called, and what methods have been taken to obtain them; or even to look over the old day-books of the merchants, to see what it was that men most commonly bought at the stores, what they stored; or, in other words, what are the grossest groceries. For the improvements of ages have had but little influence on the essential laws of man's existence: as our skeletons are probably not to be distinguished from those of our ancestors.

By the way, I should observe that Salt is perhaps the most important article to a country man in such a list as I have referred to, and the most commonly bought at the stores. Stores did not at first exist to furnish tea and coffee. I see how,

[1] Men have left off rum safely, and imprisoning for debt and chattel slavery in some places; but they are not inclined to leave off hanging men, because they have not got accustomed to that way of thinking. [*Footnote by Thoreau, omitted in the printed editions.*]

— living in Concord, — I could supply myself with every other article which I think I need, without using the stores at all; and to obtain this might be the fit occasion for a visit to the sea-shore.[1] Yet, strictly speaking, even salt cannot be called a necessary of human life, since many tribes do not use it.

I do not mean to affirm unchangeableness of the Past, while I affirm infinite changeableness of the Future. But we can see further into the future, with the evidence of faith, than into the shallower past, with the evidence of history, and we expect from the future, changes to be paralleled only, perchance, by experiences which the race has forgotten. All animals, for example, are but imperfect and infantile men; and in that Golden Age which produced him, Man also, we can imagine, was at first a mere animal.[2] He is the wisest schemer whose schemes will be the latest to succeed. The greatest discoverers have not to fear that any will infringe on their patents during their own lives.

Perhaps the Nature which produced Man, the animal, was so genial that he wanted only food to sustain his life, and that this was almost completely provided and prepared for him, like the

[1] See this thought more briefly expressed later. — F. B. S.

[2] This whole passage in its first form dates back at least to 1846, — that is, before the Development theory had much vogue, though it had been hinted at for a century or more. The thought that animals are humble editions of men is very common in Thoreau, and Channing in his *Thoreau the Poet-Naturalist* (Boston, 1902) several times recurs to it. — F. B. S.

albumen which surrounds the young bird in the egg. But after the lapse of geological periods, Nature, grown less fond, though not less kind, drove him from her breast, and is still driving him, with increasing sternness and coldness (as some assert) and gradually weaning her child. He must earn his living at last by the sweat of his brow, — that is, the exercise of his brain; in other words, by the development of his reason. What was the effort of reason in ancient men, has become, in a degree, instinct in their posterity; while, perchance, the seeds of new instincts are still being planted today.

By the words, *necessary of life,* I mean whatever, of all that man obtains by his own exertions, has been from the first, or from long use has become, so important to human life that few, if any, whether from savageness, or poverty, or from motives of economy or philosophy, ever attempt to do without it altogether. To many creatures there is in this sense but one necessary of life, Food. To the bison of the prairie it is a few inches of palatable grass, with water to drink; unless he seeks the Shelter of the forest or the mountain's shadow. None of the brute creation requires more than Food and Shelter. The necessaries of life for man in this climate may, accurately enough, be distributed under the several heads of Food, Shelter, Clothing, and Fuel; for not till we have secured these are we prepared to entertain the true problems of life with freedom and a prospect of success.

Man has invented, not only houses, but clothes and cooked food; and possibly from the acci-

dental discovery of the warmth of fire, and the consequent use of it, at first a luxury, arose the present necessity to sit by it. We observe cats and dogs acquiring the same second nature. By proper Shelter and Clothing we legitimately retain our own internal heat; but with an excess of these, or of Fuel, or at least with an external heat greater than our own internal, may not cookery properly be said to begin?

Darwin, the naturalist, says of the inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego, that while his own party, who were well clothed and sitting close to a fire, were far from too warm, these naked savages, who were farther off, were observed, to his great surprise, "to be streaming with perspiration at undergoing such a roasting." So, we are told, the New Hollander goes naked with impunity, while the European shivers in his clothes, warms his whole body simply by putting his extremities closer to the fire than the former can bear. Is it impossible to combine the hardiness of these savages with the intellectualness of the civilized man?

According to Liebig, man's body is a box stove, and the food the fuel which keeps up the internal combustion in the lungs. In cold weather we eat more, in warm less. The animal heat is in fact the result of a slow combustion, and disease and death take place when this is too rapid; or for want of fuel, or from some defect in the draught, the fire goes out. Of course the vital heat is not to be confounded with fire; but so much for analogy. It appears, therefore, from the above list, that the expression, *animal life,* is nearly synonymous with

the expression, *animal heat;* for while Food may be regarded as the Fuel which keeps up the fire within us — and Fuel serves only to prepare that Food or to increase the warmth of our bodies by addition from without, — Shelter and Clothing also serve only to retain the *heat* thus generated and absorbed.

The grand necessity, then, for our bodies, is to keep warm, to keep the vital heat in us. What pains accordingly do we take, not only with our Food, and Clothing, and Shelter, but with our beds, which are our night-clothes, robbing the nests and breasts of birds to prepare this shelter within a shelter, as the mole has its bed of grass and leaves at the end of its burrow!

The poor man is wont to complain that this is a cold world; and to cold, no less physical than social, we refer directly a great part of our ails. The summer, in some climates, makes possible to man a sort of Elysian life. Fuel, except to cook his Food, is then unnecessary; the sun is his fire, and many of the fruits are sufficiently cooked by its rays; while Food generally is more various, and more easily obtained, and Clothing and Shelter are wholly or half dispensed with even in our climate.

At the present day, and in this country, as I find by my own experience, a few implements, — a knife, an axe, a spade, a wheelbarrow, etc., and for the studious, lamplight, stationery, and access to a few books, rank next to necessaries, and can all be obtained at a trifling cost. Yet some, not wise, go to the other side of the globe, to barbarous and unhealthy regions, and devote

themselves to trade for ten or twenty years, in order that they may live — that is, keep comfortably warm — and die in New England at last. The luxuriously rich are not simply kept comfortably warm, but unnaturally hot; as I implied before, they are cooked, of course, *à la mode*.

To the elevation and ennoblement of mankind, what are called the luxuries, and many of the so-called comforts of life, are not only not indispensable, but positive hindrances. With respect to luxuries and comforts, the wisest have ever lived a more simple and meagre life than the poor. The ancient philosophers, Chinese, Hindoo, Persian, and Greek, were a class than which none has been poorer in outward riches, none so rich in inward. We know not much about them. It is remarkable that *we* know so much of them as we do. The same is true of the more modern reformers and benefactors of their race.

None can be an impartial or wise observer of human life but from the vantage ground of what *we* should call voluntary poverty. Of a life of luxury the fruit is luxury, whether in agriculture, or commerce, or literature, or art. There are now-a-days professors of philosophy, but not philosophers.[1] Yet it is admirable to profess or read, or utter simply because it was once

[1] Critics of late have been very lavish of the word "philosopher." According to them every century has had several. But we have forgotten what the word implies. These men were perhaps professors of philosophy, — readers of it, perhaps even utterers of it, to a slight extent. [*Footnote by Thoreau, omitted in the printed editions.*]

admirable to live. To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live, according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust. It is to solve the problems of life to some extent — which it is given us to solve — not only theoretically, but practically. Some modern men who have borne this title have had ambition and skill enough to lead partially successful lives, considering their circumstances. The success of great scholars and thinkers is commonly a courtier-like success, not kingly, not manly. They make shift to live merely by conformity, practically as their fathers did, and are in no sense the progenitors of a nobler race of men. But why do men degenerate ever? What makes families run out? What is the nature of the luxury which enervates and destroys nations? Are we sure that there is none of it in our own lives? The philosopher is in advance of his age even in the outward form of his life. He is not fed, sheltered, clothed, warmed, like his contemporaries. How can a man be a philosopher and not maintain his vital heat by better methods than other men?

When a man is warmed by the several modes which I have described, what does he want next? Surely not more warmth of the same kind, as more and richer food, larger and more splendid houses, finer and more abundant clothing, more numerous, incessant and hotter fires, and the like. When he has obtained those things which are necessary to life, there is another alternative than to obtain the superfluities; and that is, to adven-

ture on life now, his vacation from humbler toil having commenced. The soil, it appears, is suited to the seed, for it has sent its radicle downward, and it may now send its shoot upward also with confidence. Why has man rooted himself thus firmly in the earth, but that he may rise in the same proportion into the heavens above? — for the nobler plants are valued for the fruit they bear at last in the air and light, far from the ground, and are not treated like the humbler esculents, which, though they may be biennials, are cultivated only till they have perfected their root, and often cut down at top for this purpose, so that most would not know them in their flowering season.

I do not mean to prescribe rules to strong and valiant natures, who will mind their own affairs whether in heaven or hell, and perchance build more magnificently and spend more lavishly than the richest, without ever impoverishing themselves, not knowing how they live — if, indeed, there are any such, as has been dreamed; nor to those who find their encouragement and inspiration in precisely the present condition of things, and cherish it with the fondness and enthusiasm of lovers — and, to some extent, I reckon myself in this number. I do not speak to those who are well employed, in whatever circumstances, and they know whether they are well employed or not; — but mainly to the mass of men who are discontented, and idly complaining of the hardness of their lot or of the times, when they might improve them.

There are some who complain most energet-

ically and inconsolably of any, because they are, as they say, doing their duty. I also have in my mind that seemingly wealthy, but most terribly impoverished class of all, who have accumulated dross, but know not how to use it, or get rid of it, and thus have forged their own golden or silver fetters.

Not long since, a strolling Indian went to sell baskets at the house of a well-known lawyer in my neighborhood.[1] "Do you wish to buy any baskets?" he asked. "No, we do not want any," was the reply. "What!" exclaimed the Indian as he went out the gate, "do you mean to starve us?" Having seen his industrious white neighbors so well off, — that the lawyer had only to weave arguments, and, by some magic, wealth and standing followed, — he had said to himself: I will do like the white man; I will go into business; I will weave baskets; it is a thing which I can do.

Thinking that when he had made the baskets he would have done his part, and then it would be the white man's to buy them. He had not discovered that it was necessary for him to make it worth the other's while to buy them, or at least make him think that it was so, or to make something else which it would be worth his while to buy. I too had woven a kind of basket of a delicate texture, but I had not made it worth any one's while to buy them. Yet not the less, in my case, did I think it worth my while to weave them, and instead of studying how to make

[1] Samuel Hoar, father of the late Senator. — F. B. S.

it worth men's while to buy my baskets, I studied rather how to avoid the necessity of selling them. The life which men praise and regard as successful is but one kind. Why should we exaggerate any one kind at the expense of the others?

As our business was to be entered into without the usual capital, it may not be easy to conjecture where those means, that will still be indispensable to every such undertaking, were to be obtained. As for Clothing, to come at once to the practical part of the question, perhaps we are led oftener by the love of novelty and a regard for the opinions of men, in procuring it, than by a true utility.[1] Let him who has work to do recollect that the object of clothing is, first, to retain the vital heat, and secondly, in this state of society, to cover nakedness, and he may judge how much of any

[1] It was no doubt the strongest argument against the faith of the Millerites, that most of them continued to build and accumulate property so as to be prepared in case the world should not come to an end. From the stock of clothing which some are accustomed to lay in, I judge that they do not expect that the world will soon come to an end. Ay, there will be found old clothes enough in everybody's garret to last to the Millennium, if he only have faith in that.

The bankbill that is torn in two will pass if you have the pieces, if you have got only the essential piece with the signatures. And so it is with our garments; they may be much worn and torn, even clouted, yet be passable. Lowell and Manchester think that you will let their broadcloth currency go when it is torn; but hold on, have an eye to the signature; clout the back of it, ay, the front of it, and if it is a transmittendum, endorse the name of him from whom you received it. [*Footnote by Thoreau, found in original MS.*]

necessary or important work may be accomplished without adding to his wardrobe. Kings and queens who wear a suit but once, though made by some tailor or dressmaker to their majesties, cannot know the comfort of wearing a suit that fits. They are no better than wooden horses to hang the clean clothes on.

Every day our garments become more assimilated to ourselves, receiving the impress of the wearer's character, until we hesitate to lay them aside, without such delay and medical appliances and some such solemnity even as our bodies. No man ever stood the lower in my estimation for having a patch on his clothes: yet I am sure that there is a greater anxiety, commonly, to have fashionable, or at least clean and unpatched clothes, than to have a sound conscience. But even if the rent is not mended, perhaps the worst vice betrayed is improvidence. I sometimes try my acquaintances by such tests as this: — who could wear a patch, or two extra seams only, over the knee? Most behaved as if they believed that their prospects for life would be ruined if they should do it. It would be easier for them to hobble to town with a broken leg than with a broken pantaloon. Or, I ask, who could trundle a wheelbarrow through the village streets? Many could not stand this test. Often if an accident happens to a gentleman's legs, they can be mended; but if a similar accident happens to the legs of his pantaloons, there is usually no help for it; for he considers, not what is truly respectable, but what is respected.

We know but few men, a great many coats

and breeches. Dress a scarecrow in your last shift, you standing shiftless by, who would not soonest salute the scarecrow? Passing a cornfield the other day, close by a hat and coat on a stake, I recognized the owner of the farm. He was only a little more weather-beaten than when I saw him last.[1] I heard of a dog that barked at every stranger who approached his master's premises with clothes on, but was easily quieted by a naked thief. It is an interesting question how far men would retain their relative rank if they were divested of their clothes.

Could you, in such a case, tell surely of any company of civilized men, which belonged to the most respected class? When Madam Pfeiffer, in her adventurous travels round the world, from east to west, had got so near home as Asiatic Russia, she says that she felt the necessity of wearing other than a travelling dress, when she went to meet the authorities, for she "was now in a civilized country, where . . . people are judged of by their clothes." Even in our democratic New England towns the accidental possession of wealth, and its manifestation in dress and equipage alone, obtain for the possessor almost universal respect. But they who yield such respect, numerous as they are, are so far heathen,

[1] The back being towards me, I missed nothing; and I thought to myself that if I were a crow, I should not fear the balance of him at all. The same coat on a stick made on me the total impression which the farmer never had made. On the other hand, I have frequently mistaken a laborer in the field for a scarecrow. [*Footnote by Thoreau, found in original MS.*]

and need to have a missionary sent to them. Besides, clothes introduced sewing, a kind of work which you may call endless; a woman's dress, at least, is never done.

A man who has at length found something to do will not need to get a new suit to do it in; for him the old will do, that has lain dusty in the garret for an indeterminate period. Old shoes will serve a hero longer than they have served his valet, — if a hero ever has a valet, — bare feet are older than shoes, and he can make them do. Only they who go to soirées and legislative halls must have new coats, coats to change as often as the man changes in them. But if my jacket and trousers, my hat and shoes, are fit to worship God in, they will do; will they not?

Who ever saw his old clothes, — his old coat, actually worn out, resolved into its primitive elements, so that it was not a deed of charity to bestow it on some poor boy, by him perchance to be bestowed on some poorer still, or shall we say richer, who could do with less? I say, beware of all enterprises that require new clothes, and not rather a new wearer of clothes. If there is not a new man, how can the new clothes be made to fit? If you have any enterprise before you, try it in your old clothes. All men want, not something to *do with,* but something to *do,* or rather something to *be.*

Perhaps we should never procure a new suit, however ragged or dirty the old, until we have so conducted, so enterprised or sailed in some way, that we feel like new men in the old, and that to retain it would be like keeping new wine

in old bottles. Our moulting season, like that of the fowls, must be a crisis in our lives. The loon retires to solitary ponds to spend it. Thus also the snake casts its slough, and the caterpillar its wormy coat, by an internal industry and expansion; for clothes are but our outmost cuticle and mortal coil. Otherwise we shall be found sailing under false colors, and be inevitably cashiered at last by our own opinion, as well as that of mankind.

We don garment after garment, as if we grew like exogenous plants by addition without. Our outside and often thin and fanciful clothes are our epidermis or false skin, which partakes not of our life (or the life of the plant), and may be stripped off here and there without fatal injury; our thicker garments, constantly worn, are our cellular integument, or cortex; but our shirts are our liber or true bark, which cannot be removed without girdling and so destroying the man.

I believe that all races at some seasons wear something equivalent to the shirt. It is desirable that a man should be clad so simply that he can lay his hands on himself in the dark, and that he live in all respects so compactly and preparedly, that, if an enemy take the town, he can, like the old philosopher, walk out the gate empty-handed, without anxiety. While one thick garment is, for most purposes, as good as three thin ones, and cheap clothing can be obtained at prices really to suit customers; while a thick coat can be bought for five dollars,[1] which will last as

[1] Where Thoreau says, "a thick coat can be bought for five dollars," he added in the MS., "For example, the

many years, thick pantaloons for two dollars, cowhide boots for a dollar and a half a pair, a summer hat for a quarter of a dollar, and a winter cap for sixty-two and a half cents, or a better be made at home at a nominal cost, where is he so poor that, clad in such a suit, *of his own earning*, there will not be found wise men to do him reverence?

When I ask for a garment of a particular form, my tailoress tells me gravely, "They do not make them so now," not emphasizing the "They" at all, as if she quoted an authority as impersonal as the Fates, and I find it difficult to get made what I want, simply because she cannot believe that I mean what I say, that I am so rash. When I hear this oracular sentence, I am for a moment absorbed in thought, emphasizing to myself each word separately that I may come at the meaning of it, that I may find out by what degree of consanguinity *They* are related to *me*, and what authority they may have in an affair which affects me so nearly; and, finally, I am inclined to answer her with equal mystery, and without any more emphasis of the "they," — "It is true, they did not make them so recently, but they do now." [1]

one I have on, — and a thin one, for ninety cents." Then referring to the cost of pantaloons as being two dollars, he adds in the MS., "The most durable I ever had cost half a dollar less." These, of course, were bought at the slop-shops; but Thoreau's better garments were cut by a Concord tailor, and made by Miss Mary Minott, the village "tailoress;" she was a sister of Thoreau's crony, George Minott. — F. B. S.

[1] I just had a coat come home from the tailor. Ah me! who am I that should wear this coat? It was fitted

Of what use this measuring of me if she does not measure my character, but only the breadth of my shoulders, as it were a peg to hang the coat on?

We worship not the Graces, nor the Parcæ, but Fashion. She spins and weaves and cuts with full authority. The head monkey at Paris puts on a traveller's cap, and all the monkeys in America do the same. I sometimes despair of getting anything quite simple and honest done in this world by the help of men. They would have to be passed through a powerful press first, to squeeze their old notions out of them, so that they would not soon get upon their legs again, and then there would be some one in the company with a maggot in his head, hatched from an egg deposited there nobody knows when, for not even fire kills these things, and you would have lost your labor. Nevertheless, we will not forget that some Egyptian wheat was handed down to us by a mummy.

On the whole, I think it cannot be maintained that dressing has in this or any country risen to the dignity of the art. At present men make shift to wear what they can get. Like shipwrecked sailors, they put on what they can find on the beach, and at a little distance, whether of space or time, laugh at each other's masquerade. Every

upon one of the Devil's angels about my size. This is not the figure that I cut; this is the figure the tailor cut. Impertinent Fashion whispered in his ear, so that he heard no word of mine. Or as if I had said, "Not my will, O Fashion, but thine be done." [*Footnote by Thoreau, found in original MS.*]

generation laughs at the old fashions, but follows religiously the new. We are amused at beholding the costume of Henry VIII, or Queen Elizabeth, as much as if it was that of the King and Queen of the Cannibal Islands.

All costume off a man is pitiful or grotesque. It is only the serious eye peering from and the sincere life passed within it, which restrain laughter and consecrate the costume of any people. Let Harlequin be taken with a fit of the colic, and his trappings will have to serve that mood too. When the soldier is hit by a cannon-ball, rags are as becoming as purple.

The childish and savage taste of men and women for new patterns keeps how many shaking and squinting through kaleidoscopes that they may discover the particular figure which the shallow taste of this generation requires today. The manufacturers have learned that this taste is merely whimsical. Of two patterns which differ only by a few threads more or less of a particular color, the one will be sold readily, the other lie on the shelf, though it frequently happens that, after the lapse of a season, the latter becomes the most fashionable. Comparatively, tattooing is not the hideous custom which it is called.[1] It is

[1] This passage and the two preceding paragraphs were much abbreviated in printing. In the original MS. (written in pencil, as if it were added while the book was being printed), it was made much longer, and differently arranged, thus: —

" Comparatively speaking, tattooing is not necessarily the hideous custom it is described to be. It is the same taste that prints the calico which the wearer puts off and on, and the skin itself, which is always worn; and the

not barbarous merely because the printing is skin-deep and unalterable.

I cannot believe that our factory system is the best mode by which men may get clothing. The condition of the operatives is becoming every day more like that of the English; and it cannot be wondered at, since, as far as I have heard or observed, the principal object is, not that mankind may be well and honestly clad, but, unquestionably, that the corporations may be enriched. In the long run men hit only what they aim at.

consistent objection is rather to the pattern of the print than to the practice itself. It is not therefore barbarous because it is skin-deep.

" When I meet a fine lady or a gentleman dressed at the top of the fashion, I wonder what they would do if there should be an earthquake, or a fire should suddenly break out; for they appear to have counted on fair weather and a smooth course only. Our dress should be such as will to a certain extent fit equally well in good and bad fortune.

" When our garments are worn out, we hang them up in the fields to scare crows with, — as if the reason why men scare crows was in their clothes. I have often experienced the difficulty of getting within gunshot of a crow. It is not because they smell powder.

" It is true, all costume off a man is grotesque. It is only the serious eye and the sincere life passed within it which restrain laughter, and consecrate the costume of any people.

" Let Harlequin be taken with a fit of the colic, in the midst of his buffoonery, and the trappings will have to serve that mood too. When the soldier is hit by a cannon-ball, rags are as becoming as purple. As soon, in short, as a man engages to eat, walk, work and sit, and meet all the contingencies of life, his costume is hallowed and may be the theme of poetry." — F. B. S.

Therefore, though they should fail immediately, they had better aim at something high.

As for a Shelter, I will not deny that this is now a necessary of life, though there are instances of men having done without it for long periods in colder countries than this. Samuel Laing, who is a good authority on this subject, says that "the Laplander in his skin dress, and in a skin bag which he puts over his head and shoulders, will sleep night after night on the snow . . . in a degree of cold which would extinguish the life of one exposed to it in any woollen clothing." He had seen them asleep thus. Yet he adds, "They are not hardier than other people."

But, probably, man did not live long on the earth without discovering the convenience which there is in a house, the domestic comforts, which phrase appears to have originally signified the satisfactions of the house more than of the family; though these must be extremely partial and occasional in those climates where the house is associated in our thoughts with winter or the rainy season chiefly, and two thirds of the year, except for a parasol, is unnecessary.

In our climate, in the summer, the house was formerly almost solely a covering at night. In the Indian gazettes a wigwam was the symbol of a day's march, and a row of them cut or painted on the bark of a tree signified that so many times they had camped. Man was not made so large-limbed and robust but that he must seek to narrow his world, and wall in a space such as fitted him. He found himself at first all bare and out of doors; but though this was pleasant enough in serene

and warm weather, by daylight, the rainy season and the winter, to say nothing of the torrid sun, would perhaps have nipped his race in the bud if he had not made haste to clothe himself with the shelter of a house.

Adam and Eve, according to the fable, wore the bower before other clothes. Man wanted a home, a place of warmth, or comfort, first of physical warmth, then the warmth of the affections.

We amuse ourselves with imagining a time when, in the infancy of the human race, some enterprising mortal crept into a hollow in a rock for shelter. Every child begins the world again, to some extent, and loves to stay outdoors, even in wet and cold, longer than its parents think prudent. It plays house as well as horse, having an instinct for it.

Who does not remember the interest with which when young he looked at shelving rocks, or any approach to a cave?[1] It was the natural yearning

[1] This passage, which is made impersonal in the printed editions, was originally interestingly personal. It ran thus: "We may imagine a time when, in the infancy of the human race, a man first crept into a hollow in a rock for shelter. I have tried it myself with childish delight, as one may ride on a rail. I remember well the singular interest with which, when younger, I looked at shelving rocks, or any approach to a cavern; and that sometimes I was impelled to steal away, and sit by a fire under them, in a storm. It was the natural yearning of that portion of my most primitive ancestor which still survived in me."

Following out this fancy, Thoreau wrote on another page: "After long experience of pelting storms on the bare skin, and the alternation of sunshine and shade, some inspired wit discovered how to use Nature as a shield

of that portion of our most primitive ancestor which still survived in us. From the cave we have advanced to roofs of palm leaves, of bark and

against herself; and, doubtfully at first, yet impelled by the idea, crept into a cavity in a rock, — or perchance so far, instinct sufficed. And then some remote descendant, of more inventive genius, considering the hard fate of men who were obliged to forego the expanding plains and fertile valleys, visible afar, and restrict their wanderings to the porous hill-country, — nicely discriminating what was essential in the cave, and what adventitious, — invented the roof, — that cave above ground, the portable cave, — invented to extend palm-leaves overhead, impermeable to sun and rain, an effective protection. The record of which remains yet in all languages; in the Latin 'tectum,' in English, 'shelter' or roof, — and in the course of ages the conviction was slowly forced upon all men, that the roof was good, and deserved to prevail, — nor would the gods be displeased thereby. And lo! the plains and valleys were peopled; and the dingy, cramped and uninformed families of men were dispersed into nimble and spreading nations. And the invention has been patented in sun and rain to this day, — roofs of palm-leaves with flickering sunbeams instreaming (and dates dropping on the table); of bark and boughs, of grass and straw, of linen woven and stretched, of boards and shingles, of stones and tiles. And hence it may be, this fair-complexioned Caucasian race, so many ages in advance of its sunburned brothers. But the poet should not speak so much from under a roof; nor does the saint dwell there so long. A poet would speak always as if there were no obstruction, — not even a mote or a shadow, — between him and the celestial bodies. Generally, the voices of men sound hoarse and cavernous, tinkling as from out the recesses of caves; enough to frighten bats and toads; not like bells, not like the music of birds, — not a natural melody.

"Of all the inhabitants of Concord, I know not one that dwells in Nature. If one were to inhabit her forever,

boughs, of linen woven and stretched, of grass and straw, of boards and shingles, of stones and tiles. At last, we know not what it is to live in the open air, and our lives are domestic in more senses than we think. From the hearth to the field is a great distance.

It would be well, perhaps, if we were to spend more of our days and nights without any obstruction between us and the celestial bodies, if the poet did not speak so much from under a roof, or the saint dwell there so long. Birds do not sing in caves, nor do doves cherish their innocence in dovecots.

However, if one designs to construct a dwelling-house, it behooves him to exercise a little Yankee shrewdness, lest after all he find himself in a workhouse, a labyrinth without a clue, a museum, an almshouse, a prison, or a splendid mausoleum instead. Consider first how slight a shelter is absolutely necessary. I have seen Penobscot Indians, in this town, living in tents of thin cotton cloth, while the snow was nearly a foot deep around them, and I thought that they would be glad to have it deeper to keep out the wind.

Formerly, when how to get my living honestly, with freedom left for my proper pursuits, was a question which vexed me even more than it does now (for unfortunately I am become somewhat callous), I used to see a large box by the railroad,

he would never meet a man. This country is not settled nor discovered yet."

This line of thought was quite familiar to Thoreau, and there are numerous suggestions of it in *Walden*. — F. B. S.

six feet long by three wide, in which the laborers locked up their tools at night, and it suggested to me that every man who was hard pushed might get such a one for a dollar, and, having bored a few auger holes in it, to admit the air at least, get into it when it rained and at night, and hook down the lid, and so have freedom in his love, and in his soul be free. This did not appear the worst, nor by any means a despicable alternative. You could sit up as late as you pleased, and, whenever you got up, go abroad without any landlord or housekeeper dogging you for rent. Many a man is harassed to death to pay the rent of a larger and more luxurious box, who would not have frozen to death in such a box as this. I am far from jesting.

Economy is a subject which admits of being treated with levity, but it cannot be so disposed of. A comfortable house for a rude and hardy race, that lived mostly out of doors, was once made here of almost entirely such materials as Nature furnished ready to their hands. Gookin, who was superintendent of the Indians subject to the Massachusetts Colony, writing in 1674, says: "The best of their houses are covered very neatly, tight and warm, with barks of trees, slipped from their bodies at those seasons when the sap is up, and made into great flakes, with pressure of weighty timber, when they are green; and so, becoming dry, they retain a form suitable for the use they prepare them for. The meaner sort are covered with mats which they make of a kind of bulrush, and are also indifferently tight and warm, but not so good as the former. . . . Some I have seen,

sixty or a hundred feet long and thirty feet broad. . . . I have often lodged in their wigwams, and found them as warm as the best English houses." He adds, that they were commonly carpeted and lined within with well-wrought embroidered mats, and were furnished with various utensils. The Indians had advanced so far as to regulate the effect of the wind by a mat suspended over the hole in the roof and moved by a string. Such a lodge was in the first instance constructed in a day or two at most, and taken down and put up in a few hours; and every family owned one, or its apartment in one.

In the savage state every family owns a shelter as good as the best, and sufficient for its coarser and simpler wants; but I think that I speak within bounds when I say that, though the birds of the air have their nests, and the foxes their holes, and the savages their wigwams, in modern civilized society not more than one half the families own a shelter. In the large towns and cities, where civilization especially prevails, the number of those who own a shelter is a very small fraction of the whole. The rest pay an annual tax for this outside garment of all, become indispensable summer and winter, which would buy a village of Indian wigwams, but now helps to keep them poor as long as they live. I do not mean to insist here on the disadvantage of hiring compared with owning, but it is evident that the savage owns his shelter because it costs so little, while the civilized man hires his, commonly because he cannot afford to own it; nor can he, in the long run, any better afford to hire.

But, answers one, by merely paying this tax the poor civilized man secures an abode which is a palace compared with the savage's. An annual rent of from twenty-five to a hundred dollars (these are the country rates) entitles him to the benefit of the improvements of centuries, spacious apartments, clean paint and paper, Rumford fireplace, back plastering, Venetian blinds, copper pump, spring lock, a commodious cellar, and many other things. But how happens it that he who is said to enjoy these things is so commonly a *poor* civilized man, while the savage, who has them not, is rich as a savage?

If it is asserted that civilization is a real advance in the condition of man, — and I think that it is, though only the wise improve their advantages, — it must be shown that it has produced better dwellings without making them more costly; and the cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it, immediately or in the long run. An average house in this neighborhood costs perhaps eight hundred dollars, and to lay up this sum will take from ten to fifteen years of the laborer's life, even if he is not encumbered with a family, — estimating the pecuniary value of every man's labor at one dollar a day, for if some receive more, others receive less; — so that he must have spent more than half his life commonly before *his* wigwam will be earned. If we suppose him to pay a rent instead, this is but a doubtful choice of evils. Would the savage have been wise to exchange his wigwam for a palace on these terms?

It may be guessed that I reduce almost the

whole advantage of holding this superfluous property, as a fund against the future (so far as the individual is concerned), to the defraying of funeral expenses. But perhaps a man is not required to bury himself. Nevertheless, this points to an important distinction between the civilized man and the savage; and no doubt they have designs on us for our benefit, in making the life of a civilized people an *institution,* in which the life of the individual is to a great extent absorbed, in order to preserve and perfect that of the race. But I wish to show at what a sacrifice this advantage is at present obtained, and to suggest that we may possibly so live as to secure all the advantage without suffering any of the disadvantage. What mean ye by saying that the poor ye have always with you, or that the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?

" As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel."

" Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth it shall die."

When I consider my neighbors, the farmers of Concord, who are at least as well off as the other classes, I find that for the most part they have been toiling twenty, thirty, or forty years, that they may become the real owners of their farms, which commonly they have inherited with encumbrances, or else bought with hired money — and we may regard one third of that toil as the cost of their houses — but commonly they have not paid for them yet. It is true, the encum-

brances sometimes outweigh the value of the farm, so that the farm itself becomes one great encumbrance, and still a man is found to inherit it, being well acquainted with it, as he says.

On applying to the assessors, I am surprised to learn that they cannot at once name a dozen in the town who own their farms free and clear. If you would know the history of these homesteads, inquire at the bank where they are mortgaged. The man who has actually paid for his farm with labor on it is so rare that every neighbor can point to him. I doubt if there are three such men in Concord. What has been said of the merchants, that a very large majority, even ninety-seven in a hundred, are sure to fail, is equally true of the farmers. With regard to the merchants, however, one of them says pertinently that a great part of their failures are not genuine pecuniary failures, but merely failures to fulfil their engagements, because it is inconvenient; that is, it is the moral character that breaks down. But this puts an infinitely worse face on the matter, and suggests, beside, that probably not even the other three succeed in saving their souls, but are perchance bankrupt in a worse sense than they who fail honestly.

Bankruptcy and repudiation are the springboards from which much of our civilization vaults and turns its somersets, but the savage stands on the unelastic plank of famine. Yet the Middlesex Cattle Show goes off here with *éclat* annually, as if all the joints of the agricultural machine were suent.

The farmer is endeavoring to solve the prob-

lem of a livelihood by a formula more complicated than the problem itself. To get his shoestrings he speculates in herds of cattle. With consummate skill he has set his trap with a hair springe to catch comfort and independence, and then, as he turned away, got his own leg into it. This is the reason he is poor; and for a similar reason we are all poor in respect to a thousand savage comforts, though surrounded by luxuries. As Chapman sings, —

> The false society of men . . .
> . . . for earthly greatness
> All heavenly comforts rarefies to air.

And when the farmer has got his house, he may not be the richer but the poorer for it, and it be the house that has got him. As I understand it, that was a valid objection urged by Momus against the house which Minerva made, that she "had not made it movable, by which means a bad neighborhood might be avoided;" and it may still be urged, for our houses are such unwieldy property that we are often imprisoned rather than housed in them; and the bad neighborhood to be avoided is our own scurvy selves.

I know one or two families, at least, in this town, who, for nearly a generation, have been wishing to sell their houses in the outskirts and move into the village, but have not been able to accomplish it, and only death will set them free.

This leads me to say that almost any man — if I may be pardoned the digression — knows how to earn money, but not one in a million, having

amassed a fortune, knows how to spend it. If he had known as much as this, he would never have acquired it. Commonly the rich wear no better clothes, and build no better houses than their neighbors; for while they have been accumulating property, they have not been cultivating their taste or their wits. I think that, in winter (and I speak from experience), the poor man who wears cowhide is better shod than the rich, with India-rubbers over calf-skin.

What the rich are said to give away is not, commonly, a gift; but rather, so much abandoned to mankind, though it be the tenth part of their income annually. But even with money you might do something grander and more imposing. A small sum would really do much good, if the donor spent himself with it, — in other words, saw it through and did not merely relinquish it to some distant society, as the Colonization Society, or the Society for Foreign Missions, whose managers do the good or evil with it.

How much might be done for this town with a hundred dollars! I myself have once provided a select course of twenty-five lectures for a winter, together with room, fuel and lights, with that sum;[1] which was no inconsiderable benefit to

[1] In this passage (which was omitted in the printed editions), Thoreau refers to a feat of his own, truly remarkable, — especially in view of the money-rates now received for lectures. As " Curator " of the Concord Lyceum, an institution now eighty years old, in which he was for ten years very active, he received from his fellow-citizens about $109 in the winter of 1843–44; left the nine dollars in the treasury as a nest-egg for the next winter, and for the sum named did procure excellent lectures

every inhabitant. With $1000 I could purchase for Concord a more complete and select library (in my opinion) than exists in the State, outside of Cambridge and Boston, — and perhaps a more available one than any. Men sit paralyzed and helpless by the side of their buried treasures. After all, those who do the most good with money do it with the least amount; because they can do better than to acquire it.

Granted that the *majority* are able at last either to own or hire the modern house with all its improvements. While civilization has been improving our houses, it has not equally improved the men who are to inhabit them. It has created palaces, but it was not so easy to create noblemen and kings. And *if the civilized man's pursuits are no worthier than the savage's, if he is employed the greater part of his life in obtaining gross necessaries and comforts merely, why should we have a better dwelling than the former?*

But how do the poor *minority* fare? Perhaps it will be found, that just in proportion as some

from Emerson, Theodore Parker, Horace Greeley, George Bancroft, Dr. E. H. Chapin (then a popular orator preaching at Charlestown), James Freeman Clarke, Henry Giles, and enough others to bring the number of lectures up to five-and-twenty. The highest price paid by him was $10 each, to Mr. Bancroft the historian and Henry Giles; to Dr. Chapin he paid $8, to Parker $3, and to Emerson, who lectured three times, nothing, — it being etiquette in Concord to give your lecture gratis, if you had the honor to live in the town. Wendell Phillips was another of this Spartan band of lecturers, and Thoreau himself gave more than one lecture. — F. B. S.

have been placed in outward circumstances above the savage, others have been degraded below him. The luxury of one class is counterbalanced by the indigence of another. On the one side is the palace, on the other are the almshouse and " silent poor." The myriads who built the pyramids to be the tombs of the Pharaohs were fed on garlic, and it may be were not decently buried themselves. The mason who finishes the cornice of the palace returns at night perchance to a hut not so good as a wigwam.

It is a mistake to suppose that, in a country where the usual evidences of civilization — railroads, steamboats, printing presses, churches and the like — exist, the condition of a very large body of the inhabitants may not be as degraded as that of savages. I refer to the degraded poor, not now to the degraded rich. To know this I should not need to look farther than to the shanties which everywhere border our railroads, that last improvement in civilization; where I see in my daily walks human beings living in sties, and all winter with an open door, for the sake of light, without any visible, often imaginable, wood-pile, and the forms of both old and young are permanently contracted by the long habit of shrinking from cold and misery; their faces pinched by want, and the development of all their limbs and faculties is checked. There is no greater squalidness in the world. It certainly is fair to look at that class by whose labor the works which distinguish this generation are accomplished. Such too, to a greater or less extent, is the condition of the operatives of every denomination in

England, which is the great workhouse of the world.

Or I could refer you to Ireland, which is marked as one of the white or enlightened spots on the map. Contrast the physical condition of the Irish with that of the North American Indian, or the South Sea Islander, or any other savage race before it was degraded by contact with the civilized man. Yet I have no doubt that that people's rulers are as wise as the average of civilized rulers. Their condition only proves what squalidness may consist with civilization. I hardly need refer now to the laborers in our Southern States who produce the staple exports of this country, and are themselves a staple production of the South. But to confine myself to those who are said to be in *moderate* circumstances.

Most men appear never to have considered what a house is, and are actually though needlessly poor all their lives because they think that they must have such a one as their neighbors have. As if one were to wear any sort of coat which the tailor might cut out for him, or, gradually leaving off palm-leaf hat or cap of woodchuck skin, complain of hard times because he could not afford to buy him a crown! It is possible to invent a house still more convenient and luxurious than we have, which yet all would admit that man could afford to pay for. Shall we always study to obtain more of these things, and not sometimes to be content with less? Shall the respectable citizen thus gravely teach, by precept and example, the necessity of the young man's

providing a certain number of superfluous glow-shoes [1] and umbrellas, and empty guest chambers, for empty guests, before he dies? Why should not our furniture be as simple as the Arab's or the Indian's?

When I think of the benefactors of the race, whom we have apotheosized as messengers from heaven, bearers of divine gifts to man, I do not see in my mind any retinue at their heels, any car-load of fashionable furniture. Or what if I were to allow — would it not be a singular allowance? — that our furniture should be more complex than the Arab's, in proportion as we are morally and intellectually his superiors! At present our houses are cluttered and defiled with it, and a good housewife would sweep out the greater part into the dust-hole, and not leave her morning's work undone.

Morning work! By the blushes of Aurora and the music of Memnon, what should be man's *morning work* in this world? I had three pieces of limestone on my desk, but I was terrified to find that they required to be dusted daily, when the furniture of my mind was all undusted still, and I threw them out the window in disgust. How, then, could I have a furnished house? I would rather sit in the open air, for no dust gathers on the grass, unless where man has broken ground.

It is the luxurious and dissipated who set the fashions which the herd so diligently follow. The traveller who stops at the best houses, so

[1] Goloshes, — overshoes.

called, soon discovers this, for the publicans presume him to be a Sardanapalus, and if he resigned himself to their tender mercies he would soon be completely emasculated.

I think that in the railroad car we are inclined to spend more on luxury than on safety and convenience, and it threatens without attaining these to become no better than a modern drawing-room, with its divans, and ottomans, and sunshades, and a hundred other oriental things, which we are taking west with us, invented for the ladies of the harem and the effeminate natives of the Celestial Empire, which Jonathan should be ashamed to know the names of. I would rather sit on a pumpkin and have it all to myself than to be crowded on a velvet cushion. I would rather ride on earth in an ox-cart with a free circulation than go to heaven in the fancy car of an excursion train and breathe *malaria* all the way.

The very simplicity and nakedness of man's life in the primitive ages imply this advantage at least, that they left him still but a sojourner in nature. When he was refreshed with food and sleep he contemplated his journey again. He dwelt, as it were, in a tent in this world, and was either threading the valleys, or crossing the plains, or climbing the mountain tops. But lo! men have become the tools of their tools. The man who independently plucked the fruits when he was hungry is become a farmer; and he who stood under a tree for shelter, a housekeeper. We now no longer camp as for a night, but have settled down on earth and forgotten heaven.

We have adopted Christianity merely as an improved method of *agri*-culture. We have built for this world a family mansion, and for the next a family tomb. The best works of art are the expression of man's struggle to free himself from this condition, but the effect of our art is merely to make this low state comfortable and that higher state to be forgotten. There is actually no place in this village for a work of *fine* art, — a statue, for instance — if any has come down to us, to stand; for our lives, our houses and streets furnish no proper pedestal for it. There is not a nail to hang a picture on, nor a shelf to receive the bust of a hero or a saint.

When I consider how our houses are built and paid for, or not paid for, and their internal economy managed and sustained, I wonder that the floor does not give way under the visitor while he is admiring the gewgaws upon the mantelpiece, and let him through into the cellar, to some solid and honest though earthy foundation.

I cannot but perceive that this so-called rich and refined life is a thing jumped at, and I do not get on in the enjoyment of the *fine* arts which adorn it, my attention being wholly occupied with the jump; for I remember that the greatest genuine leap, due to human muscles alone, on record, is that of certain wandering Arabs, who are said to have cleared twenty-five feet on level ground. Without factitious support, man is sure to come to earth again beyond that distance. The first question which I am tempted to put to the proprietor of such great impropriety is, Who bolsters you? Are you one of the ninety-seven

who fail, or the three who succeed? Answer me these questions, and then perhaps I may look at your bawbles and find them ornamental.

The cart before the horse is neither beautiful nor useful. Before we can adorn our houses with beautiful objects the walls must be stripped, and our lives must be stripped, and beautiful housekeeping and beautiful living be laid for a foundation. Now, what we call a taste for the beautiful is most cultivated out of doors, where there is no house and no housekeeper.

Old Johnson, in his "Wonder-Working Providence," speaking of the first settlers of this town, with whom he was contemporary, tells us that "they burrow themselves in the earth for their first shelter under some hillside, and, casting the soil aloft upon timber, they make a smoky fire against the earth, at the highest side." They did not "provide them houses," says he, "till the earth, by the Lord's blessing, brought forth bread to feed them," and the first year's crop was so light that "they were forced to cut their bread very thin for a long season."

The secretary of the Province of New Netherland, writing in Dutch, in 1650, for the information of those who wished to take up land there, states more particularly, that "those in New Netherland, and especially in New England, who have no means to build farm-houses at first according to their wishes, dig a square pit in the ground, cellar fashion, six or seven feet deep, as long and as broad as they think proper, case the earth inside with wood all round the wall, and line the wood with the bark of trees or something

else to prevent the caving-in of the earth; floor this cellar with plank, and wainscot it overhead for a ceiling, raise a roof of spars clear up, and cover the spars with bark or green sods, so that they can live dry and warm in these houses with their entire families for two, three, and four years, it being understood that partitions are run through those cellars which are adapted to the size of the family. The wealthy and principal men in New England, in the beginning of the colonies, commenced their first dwelling-houses in this fashion, for two reasons: firstly, in order not to waste time in building, and not to want food the next season; secondly, in order not to discourage poor laboring people whom they brought over in numbers from Fatherland. In the course of three or four years, when the country became adapted to agriculture, they built themselves handsome houses, spending on them several thousands."

In this course which our ancestors took there was a show of prudence at least, as if their principle were to satisfy the more pressing wants first. But are the more pressing wants satisfied now? When I think of acquiring for myself one of our luxurious dwellings, I am deterred, for, so to speak, the country is not yet adapted to *human* culture, and we are still forced to cut our *spiritual* bread far thinner than our forefathers did their wheaten. Not that all architectural ornament is to be neglected even in the rudest periods; but let our houses first be lined with beauty, where they come in contact with our lives, like the tenement of the shell-fish, and not

overlaid with it. But, alas! I have been inside one or two of them, and know what they are lined with.

Though we are not so degenerate but that we might possibly live in a cave or a wigwam or wear skins today, it certainly is better to accept the advantages, though so dearly bought, which the invention and industry of mankind offer. In such a neighborhood as this, boards and shingles, lime and bricks, are cheaper and more easily obtained than suitable caves, or whole logs, or bark in sufficient quantities, or even well-tempered clay or flat stones. I speak understandingly on this subject, for I have made myself acquainted with it, both theoretically and practically. With a little more wit we might use these materials so as to become richer than the richest now are, and make our civilization a blessing. The civilized man is a more experienced and wiser savage.

It would be worth the while to build still more deliberately and practically than I did, considering, for instance, what foundation a door, a window, a cellar, a garret, have in the nature of man, and perchance never raising any superstructure until we found a better reason for it than our temporal necessities even. There is some of the same fitness in a man's building his own house that there is in a bird's building its own nest.

Who knows but if men constructed their dwellings with their own hands, and provided food for themselves and families simply and honestly enough, the poetic faculty would be universally developed, as birds universally sing when they are so engaged? But alas! we do like cow-birds

and cuckoos, which lay their eggs in nests which other birds have built, and cheer no traveller with their chattering and unmusical notes. Shall we forever resign the pleasure of construction to the carpenter? In building a shelter for himself man yields to the like instinct with the bird who is building her nest, and who celebrates her labors with her song. What does architecture amount to in the experience of the mass of men? I never in all my walks came across a man engaged in so simple and natural an occupation as building his house. We belong to the community. It is not the tailor alone who is the ninth part of a man,[1] it is as much the preacher, and the merchant, and the farmer. Where is this division of labor to end? and what object does it finally serve? No doubt another *may* also think for me; but it is not therefore desirable that he should do so to the exclusion of my thinking for myself.

Take the article ice, for instance, I say that society is foolish which so unwisely adds this to the already long list of its luxuries. My argument is this: We are exceedingly poor and bankrupt, living beyond our means — ice is a mere luxury at best and concomitant of luxuries, and it is an expensive luxury — say what you will about it.[2]

Have twenty mats at your door if you have leisure to shake them yourself. The fatuity with

[1] That remark applies universally to the condition of men today. [*Thoreau's note, in original MS.*]

[2] Thoreau's rustic ideas about ice, as also the remarks in the next paragraph, were omitted in the printed work, — the publishers perhaps regarding them as nonsensical.

which society adopts and clutches at new luxuries! It is a roué, a débauché, and will not listen to reason — as well reason with a sick man. You must use force for his good, or let him die.

True, there are architects, so called, in this country, as elsewhere, and I have heard of one [1] at least possessed with the idea of making architectural ornaments have a core of truth, a necessity, and hence a beauty, as if it were a revelation to him. All very well perhaps from his point of view, but only a little better than the common dilettantism. A sentimental reformer in architecture, he began at the cornice, not at the foundation. It was only how to put a core of truth within the ornaments, that every sugar plum in fact might have an almond or caraway seed in it, — though I hold that almonds are most wholesome without the sugar, — and not how the inhabitant, the indweller, might build truly within and without, and let the ornaments take care of themselves.

What reasonable man ever supposed that ornaments were something outward and in the skin merely — that the tortoise got his spotted shell, or the shell-fish its mother-of-pearl tints, by such a contract as the inhabitants of Broadway their Trinity Church? But a man has no more to do with the style of architecture of his house than the tortoise with that of its shell; nor need the soldier be so idle as to try to paint the precise *color* of his virtue on his standard. The enemy will find it out. He may turn pale when the trial

[1] This was Horatio Greenough, the sculptor.

comes. This man seemed to me to lean over the cornice, and timidly whisper his half truth to the rude occupants who really knew it better than he. What of architectural beauty I now see, I know has gradually grown from within outward, out of the necessities and character of the indweller, who is the only builder — out of some unconscious truthfulness, and nobleness, without ever a thought for mere ornament; and whatever additional beauty of this kind is destined to be produced will be preceded and accompanied, aye, created, by a like unconscious beauty of life.

The most interesting dwellings in the country, as the painter knows, are the most unpretending, — humble log huts and cottages of the poor, commonly. It is the life of the inhabitants whose shells they are, and not any peculiarity in their surfaces merely, which makes them *picturesque;* and equally interesting will be the citizen's suburban box, when the life of the indweller shall be as simple and as agreeable to the imagination, and there is as little straining after effect in the style of his dwelling. A great proportion of architectural ornaments are literally hollow, and a September gale would strip them off, like borrowed plumes, without injury to the substantials. They can do without *architecture* who have no olives nor wines in the cellar.

What if an equal ado were made about the ornaments of style in literature, and the architects of our bibles spent as much time about their cornices as the architects of our churches do? So are made the *belles-lettres* and the *beaux-arts* and their professors. Much it concerns a man,

forsooth, how a few sticks are slanted over him or under him, and what colors are daubed upon his box. It would signify somewhat, if, in any earnest sense, *he* slanted them and daubed them; but the spirit having departed out of the tenant, it is of a piece with constructing his own coffin, — the architecture of the grave, and "carpenter" is but another name for "coffin-maker." One man says, in his despair or indifference to life, take up a handful of the earth at your feet, and paint your house that color (is he thinking of his last and narrow house?). Toss up a copper for it as well. What an abundance of leisure he must have! Why do you take up a handful of dirt? Better paint your house your own complexion; let it turn pale or blush for you. An enterprise to improve the style of cottage architecture! When you have got my ornaments ready I will wear them.

If I seem to boast more than is consistent with good taste in what I am about to say, my excuse is that I brag for humanity rather than for myself; and certainly my numerous shortcomings and inconsistencies do not affect the truth of my statement. Notwithstanding much cant and hypocrisy, — chaff which I find it difficult to separate from my wheat, but for which I am as sorry as any man, — I will breathe freely and stretch myself in this respect, it is such a relief to both the moral and physical system; and I am resolved that I will not through humility become the devil's attorney. I will endeavor to speak a good word for the truth.

At Cambridge College the mere rent of a student's room, which is only a little larger than my own, is thirty dollars each year, though the corporation had the advantage of building thirty-two side by side and under one roof, and the occupant suffers the inconvenience of many and noisy neighbors, and perhaps a residence in the fourth story. I cannot but think that if we had more true and practical wisdom in these respects, not only less education would be needed, because, forsooth, more would already have been acquired, but the pecuniary expense of getting an education would in a great measure vanish. Those conveniences which the student requires at Cambridge or elsewhere cost him or somebody else ten times as great a sacrifice of life as they would with proper management on both sides.

Those things for which the most money is demanded are never the things which the student most wants. Tuition, for instance, is an important item in the term bill, while for the far more valuable education which he gets by associating with the most cultivated of his contemporaries no charge is made. The mode of founding a college is, commonly, to get up a subscription of dollars and cents, and then following blindly the principles of a division of labor to its extreme — a principle which should never be followed but with circumspection — to call in a contractor, who makes this a subject of speculation, and he employs Irishmen or other operatives actually to lay the foundations, while the students that are to be are said to be *fitting themselves for it;* and for these oversights successive generations have

to pay. I think that it would undoubtedly be *better than this,* for the students, or those who desire to be benefited by it, even to lay the foundation themselves. The student who secures his coveted leisure and retirement by systematically shirking any labor necessary to man obtains but an ignoble and unprofitable leisure, defrauding himself of the experience which alone can make leisure fruitful.

"But," says one, "you do not mean that the students should go to work with their hands instead of their heads?" I do not mean that exactly, but I mean something which he might think a good deal like that; I mean that they should not *play* life, or *study* it merely, while the community supports them at this expensive game, but earnestly *live* it from beginning to end. How could youths better learn to live than by at once trying the experiment of living? Methinks this would exercise their minds as much as mathematics.

If I wished a boy to know something about the arts and sciences, for instance, I would not pursue the common course, which is merely to send him into the neighborhood of some professor, where anything is professed and practised but the art of life; — to survey the world through a telescope or a microscope, and never with his natural eye; to study chemistry, and not learn how his bread is made, or mechanics, and not learn how it is earned; to discover new satellites to Neptune, and not detect the motes in his eyes, or to what vagabond he is a satellite himself; or to be devoured by the monsters that swarm all around

him, while contemplating the monsters in a drop of vinegar. Which would have advanced the most at the end of a month, — the boy who had made his own jackknife from the ore which he had dug and smelted, reading as much as would be necessary for this — or the boy who had attended the lectures on metallurgy at the Institute in the meanwhile, and had received a Rogers' penknife from his father? Which would be most likely to cut his fingers?

I remember that to my astonishment I was informed on leaving college that I had studied navigation! — why, if I had taken one turn down the harbor I should have known more about it. Even the *poor* student studies and is taught only *political* economy, while that economy of living which is synonymous with philosophy is not even sincerely professed in our colleges. The consequence is, that while he is reading Adam Smith, Ricardo, and Say, he runs his father in debt irretrievably.

As with our colleges, so with a hundred "modern improvements:" there is an illusion about them; there is not always a positive advance. The devil goes on exacting compound interest to the last for his early share and numerous succeeding investments in them. Our inventions are wont to be pretty toys, which detract our attention from serious things. They are but improved means to an unimproved end, an end which it was already but too easy to arrive at — as railroads lead to Boston or New York.

We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to com-

municate.[1] Either is in such a predicament as the man who was earnest to be introduced to a distinguished deaf woman, but when he was presented, and one end of her ear-trumpet was put into his hand, had nothing to say.[2] As if the main object were to talk fast and not to talk sensibly.

We are eager to tunnel under the Atlantic and bring the old world some weeks nearer to the new; but perchance the first news that will leak through into the broad flapping American ear will be that the Princess Adelaide has the whooping cough. After all, the man whose horse trots a mile in a minute does not carry the most im-

[1] As originally written, before Texas became an important part of the United States, this passage was a little fuller, and more humorous: "Men are in a great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Louisiana; but Maine and Louisiana have nothing to communicate. I don't remember anything that Louisiana ever said."

[2] The deaf woman was Harriet Martineau, who visited Concord in 1836–37, while in America, and was given a reception by Mrs. Waldo Emerson. Thoreau met her at that time, and in Boston she visited the Temple School of Bronson Alcott, of which she gave her English friends and the public rather an unfavorable view, — for which Margaret Fuller reproved her.

In giving the statistics of food-consumption, already set forth in Chapter I, Thoreau indulged in a little sport with his superfine readers. He said, both in his lecture and his Journal, — "Now I come to something which may offend persons of a refined taste; but if I have the honor to address any who abstain wholly from the vulgar practices of eating, drinking and sleeping, I warn them not to look at that page in my journal, which contains an accurate list of the articles of food which I consumed in two years." — F. B. S.

portant messages: he is not one of the evangelists, nor does he come round eating locusts and wild honey. I doubt if Flying Childers ever carried a peck of corn to mill.[1]

One says to me, "I wonder that you do not lay up money; you love to travel; you might take the cars and go to Fitchburg today and see the country." But I am wiser than that. I have learned that the swiftest traveller is he that goes afoot. I say to my friend, Suppose we try who will get there first. The distance is thirty miles; the fare ninety cents — less than most roads; yet that is almost a day's wages. I remember when wages were sixty cents a day for laborers on this very road. Well, I start now on foot, and get there before night; I have travelled at that rate by the week together. You will in the mean while have earned your fare, and arrive there some time tomorrow, or possibly this evening, if you are lucky enough to get a job in season. Instead of going to Fitchburg, you will be working here the greater part of the day. And so, if the railroad reached round the world, I think that I should keep ahead of you; and as for seeing the country and getting experience of that kind, I should have to cut your acquaintance altogether.

Such is the universal law, which no man can ever outwit; and with regard to the railroad even, we may say it is as broad as it is long.

To make a railroad round the world, available to all mankind, is equivalent to grading the whole

[1] This was a famous race-horse of the 18th century in England.

surface of the planet. Men have an indistinct notion that if they keep up this activity of joint stocks and spades long enough, all will at length ride somewhere, in next to no time, and for nothing; but though a crowd rushes to the depot, and the conductor shouts "All aboard!" when the smoke is blown away and the vapor condensed, it will be perceived that a few are riding, but the rest are run over; and it will be called, and will be, "A melancholy accident." No doubt they can ride at last who shall have earned their fare, — that is, if they survive so long; but they will probably have lost their elasticity and desire to travel by that time. This spending of the best part of one's life earning money, in order to enjoy a questionable liberty during the least valuable part of it, reminds me of the Englishman who went to India to make a fortune first, in order that he might return to England and live the life of a poet. He should have gone up garret at once. "What!" exclaim a million Irishmen starting up from all the shanties in the land, "is not this railroad which we have built a good thing?" Yes, I answer, *comparatively* good; that is, you might have done worse; but I wish, as you are brothers of mine, that you could have spent your time better than digging in this dirt.

Saadi tells us who may travel, — among others, "A common mechanic, who can earn a subsistence by the industry of his hands, and shall not have to stake his reputation for every morsel of bread, as philosophers have said."

He may travel who can subsist on the wild fruits and game of the most cultivated country.

A man may travel fast enough, and earn his living on the road.[1] I have frequently been applied to, when on a journey, to do work; to do tinkering and repair clocks when I had a knapsack on my back. A man once applied to me to go into a factory, stating conditions and wages, — observing that I succeeded in shutting the window of a railroad car in which we were travelling, when the other passengers had failed. "Hast thou not heard of a Sufi who was hammering some nails into the sole of his sandal? An officer of Cavalry took him by the sleeve, saying, 'Come along and shoe my horse.'" But this admits of a higher application.

Farmers, when I was passing their fields, have asked me to assist them in haying. A man once applied to me to mend his umbrella, taking me for an umbrella-mender, because, being on a journey, I carried an umbrella in my hand while the sun shone. Another wished to buy of me a tin cup, — observing that I had one strapped to my belt, and a saucepan on my back. There are many ways in which a man can live on the road, without carrying a barrel-organ.

I am wont to think that men are not so much the keepers of herds as herds are the keepers of men, the former are so much the freer. Men and oxen exchange work; but if we consider necessary work only, the oxen will be seen to have

[1] At this time (1846), and for some years before and after, Thoreau supported himself wholly by manual labor. — "I find that by working about six weeks in the year, I have free the whole of my winters and most of my summers." — F. B. S.

greatly the advantage, their farm is so much the larger. Man does some of his part of the exchange work in his six weeks of haying, and it is no boy's play.

Certainly no nation that lived simply in all respects — that is, no nation of philosophers — would commit so great a blunder as to use the labor of animals. True, there never was and is not likely soon to be a nation of philosophers, nor am I certain it is desirable that there should be. However, *I* should never have broken a horse or bull, and taken him to board for any work he might do for me, for fear I should become a horse-man or a herds-man merely; and if society seems to be the gainer by so doing, are we certain that what is one man's gain is not another's loss, and that the stable-boy has equal cause with his master to be satisfied?

Granted that some public works would not have been constructed without this aid, and let man share the glory of such with the ox and horse; does it follow that he could not have accomplished works yet more worthy of himself in that case? When men begin to do, not merely unnecessary or artistic, but luxurious and idle work, with their assistance, it is inevitable that a few do all the exchange work with the oxen, or, in other words, become the slaves of the strongest. Man thus not only works for the animal within him, but, for a symbol of this, he works for the animal without him. Though we have many substantial houses of brick or stone, the prosperity of the farmer is still measured by the degree to which the barn overshadows the house.

This town is said to have the largest houses for oxen, cows, and horses hereabouts, and it is not behindhand in its public buildings; but there are very few halls for free worship or free speech in this country. Very common is the love of oxen and horses, and gentlemen farmers are ambitious to rear calves rather than men. It should not be by their architecture, but why not even by their power of abstract thought, that nations should seek to commemorate themselves? How much more admirable the Bhagvat-Geeta than all the ruins of the East! Towers and temples are the luxury of princes.

A simple and independent mind does not toil at the bidding of any prince. Genius is not a retainer to any emperor, nor is its material silver, or gold, or marble, except to a trifling extent. To what end, pray, is so much stone hammered? In Arcadia, when I was there, I did not see any hammering stone. Nations are possessed with an insane ambition to perpetuate the memory of themselves by the amount of hammered stone they leave.[1] What if equal pains were taken to smooth and polish their manners? One piece of good sense would be more memorable than a monument as high as the moon. I love better to see stones in place.

The grandeur of Thebes was a vulgar grandeur. More sensible is a rod of stone wall that bounds an honest man's field than a hundred-gated Thebes that has wandered farther from

[1] We find this truth exemplified in visiting the ruins of Egypt and Rome. — H. H. H.

the true end of life. The religion and civilization which are barbaric and heathenish build splendid temples; but what you might call Christianity does not. Most of the stone a nation hammers goes toward its tomb only. It buries itself alive. As for the Pyramids, there is nothing to wonder at in them so much as the fact that so many men could be found degraded enough to spend their lives constructing a tomb for some ambitious booby, whom it would have been wiser and manlier to have drowned in the Nile, and then given his body to the dogs. I might possibly invent some excuse for them and him, but I have no time for it.

As for the religion and love of art of the builders, it is much the same all the world over, whether the building be an Egyptian temple or the United States Bank. It costs more than it comes to. The mainspring is vanity, assisted by the love of garlic and bread and butter. Mr. Balcom, a promising young architect, designs it on the back of his Vitruvius, with hard pencil and ruler, and the job is let out to Dobson & Sons, stone-cutters. When the thirty centuries begin to look down on it, mankind begin to look up at it. As for your high towers and monuments, there was a crazy fellow once in this town who undertook to dig through to China, and he got so far that he said he heard the Chinese pots and kettles rattle. But I think that I shall not go out of my way to admire the hole which he made.

Many are concerned about the monuments of the West and the East, — to know who built

them. For my part, I should like to know who, in those days, did not build them, — who were above such trifling.

Every New Englander might easily raise his own breadstuffs in this land of rye and Indian corn, and not depend on distant and fluctuating markets for them. Yet so far are we from simplicity and independence that, in Concord, fresh and sweet meal is rarely sold in the shops, and hominy and corn, in a still coarser form, are hardly used by any.[1] For the most part the farmer gives to his cattle and hogs the grain of his own producing, and buys flour, which is at least no more wholesome, at a greater cost, at the store.

I saw that I could easily raise my bushel or two of rye and Indian corn, for the former will grow on the poorest land, and the latter does not require the best, — and grind them in a hand-mill, and so do without rice and pork; and if I must have some concentrated sweet, I found by experiment that I could make a very good molasses either of pumpkins or beets, and I knew that I needed only to set out a few maples to obtain it more easily still, and while these were growing I could use various substitutes beside those which I have named. "For," as the Forefathers sang, —

> ". . . we can make liquor to sweeten our lips
> Of pumpkins and parsnips and walnut-tree chips."

[1] All this has changed in the last sixty years, and many forms of all the cereals are now to be bought fresh and sweet in the Concord shops. Indeed, the changes in

Finally, as for salt, that grossest of groceries, to obtain this might be a fit occasion for a visit to the seashore, or, if I did without it altogether, I should probably drink the less water. I do not learn that the Indians ever troubled themselves to go after it.

Thus I could avoid all trade and barter, so far as my food was concerned, and having a shelter already, it would only remain to get clothing and fuel. The pantaloons which I now wear were woven in a farmer's family, — thank Heaven there is so much virtue still in man; for I think the fall from the farmer to the operative as great and memorable as that from the man to the farmer; — and in a new country, fuel is an encumbrance.

As for a habitat, if I were not permitted still to squat, I might purchase one acre at the same price for which the land I cultivated was sold — namely, eight dollars and eight cents. But as it was, I considered that I enhanced the value of the land by squatting on it.

There is a certain class of unbelievers who sometimes ask me such questions as, if I think that I can live on vegetable food alone; and to strike at the root of the matter at once, — for the root is faith, — I am accustomed to answer such, that I can live on board nails. If they cannot understand that, they cannot understand much that I have to say.

For my own part, I am glad to hear of ex-

the whole situation since this was written have been very great, — and things were never quite so bad as Thoreau paradoxically maintained. — F. B. S.

periments of this kind being tried; as that a young man tried for a fortnight to live on hard, raw corn on the ear, using his teeth for all mortar. The squirrel tribe tried the same and succeeded. The human race is interested in these experiments, though a few old women who are incapacitated for them, or who own their thirds in mills, may be alarmed.

I learned from my two years' experience that it would cost incredibly little trouble to obtain one's necessary food, even in this latitude; that a man may use as simple a diet as the animals, and yet retain health and strength. I have made a satisfactory dinner, satisfactory on several accounts, simply off a dish of purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*) which I gathered in my cornfield, boiled and salted. I give the Latin on account of the savoriness of the trivial name. And pray what more can a reasonable man desire, in peaceful times, in ordinary noons, than a sufficient number of ears of green sweet-corn boiled, with the addition of salt? Even the little variety which I used was a yielding to the demands of appetite, and not of health. Yet men have come to such a pass that they frequently starve, not for want of necessaries, but for want of luxuries; and I know a good woman who thinks that her son lost his life because he took to drinking water only.

The reader will perceive that I am treating the subject rather from an economic than a dietetic point of view, and he will not venture to put my abstemiousness to the test unless he has a well-stocked larder.

The customs of some savage nations might,

perchance, be profitably imitated by us, for they at least go through the semblance of casting their slough annually; they have the idea of the thing, whether they have the reality or not. Would it not be well if we were to celebrate such a "busk," or "feast of first fruits," as Bartram describes to have been the custom of the Mucclasse Indians? "When a town celebrates the busk," says he, "having previously provided themselves with new clothes, new pots, pans, and other household utensils and furniture, they collect all their worn-out clothes and other despicable things, sweep and cleanse their houses, squares, and the whole town, of their filth, which with all the remaining grain and other old provisions they cast together into one common heap, and consume it with fire. After having taken medicine, and fasted for three days, all the fire in the town is extinguished. During this fast they abstain from the gratification of every appetite and passion whatever. A general amnesty is proclaimed; all malefactors may return to their town, and they are absolved from their crimes, which are forgotten, and they are restored to favor.

"On the fourth morning, the high priest, by rubbing dry wood together, produces new fire in the public square, from whence every habitation in the town is supplied with the new and pure flame."

They then feast on the new corn and fruits, and dance and sing for three days, "and the four following days they receive visits and rejoice with their friends from neighboring towns who have in like manner purified and prepared themselves."

The Mexicans also practised a similar purification at the end of every fifty-two years, in the belief that it was time for the world to come to an end.

I have scarcely heard of a truer sacrament, that is, as the dictionary defines it, "outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace," than this, and I have no doubt that they were originally inspired directly from Heaven to do this; though they have no Biblical record of the revelation.

For more than five years (i. e., at the time this was written) I maintained myself thus solely by the labor of my hands, and I found that, by working about six weeks in a year, I could meet all the expenses of living. The whole of my winters, as well as most of my summers, I had free and clear for study.

I have thoroughly tried school-keeping, and found that my expenses were in proportion, or rather out of proportion, to my income, for I was obliged to dress and train, not to say think and believe, accordingly, and I lost my time into the bargain. As I did not teach for the good of my fellow-men, but simply for a livelihood, this was a failure. I have tried trade; but I found that it would take ten years to get under way in that, and that then I should probably be on my way to the devil. I was actually afraid that I might by that time be doing what is called a good business.

When formerly I was looking about to see what I could do for a living, some sad experience in conforming to the wishes of friends being fresh

in my mind to tax my ingenuity, I thought often and seriously of picking huckleberries; that surely I could do, and its small profits might suffice — for my greatest skill has been to want but little — so little capital it required, so little distraction from my wonted moods, I foolishly thought. While my acquaintances went unhesitatingly into trade or the professions, I contemplated this occupation as most like theirs; ranging the hills all summer to pick the berries which came in my way, and thereafter carelessly dispose of them; so, to keep the flocks of Admetus. I also dreamed that I might gather the wild herbs, or carry evergreens to such villagers as loved to be reminded of the woods, even to the city, by hay-cart loads. But I have since learned that trade curses everything it handles; and though you trade in messages from Heaven, the whole curse of trade attaches to the business.

As I preferred some things to others, and especially valued my freedom, as I could fare hard and yet succeed well, I did not wish to spend my time in earning rich carpets or other fine furniture, or delicate cookery, or a house in the Grecian or the Gothic style just yet. If there are any to whom it is no interruption to acquire these things, and who know how to use them when acquired, I relinquish to them the pursuit. Some are " industrious," and appear to love labor for its own sake, or perhaps because it keeps them out of worse mischief; to such I have at present nothing to say.

Those who would not know what to do with more leisure than they now enjoy, I might advise

to work twice as hard as they do — work till they pay for themselves, and get their free papers. For myself I found that the occupation of a day-laborer was the most independent of any, especially as it required only thirty or forty days in a year to support one. The laborer's day ends with the going down of the sun, and he is then free to devote himself to his chosen pursuit, independent of his labor; but his employer, who speculates from month to month, has no respite from one end of the year to the other.

In short, I am convinced, both by faith and experience, that to maintain one's self on this earth is not a hardship but a pastime, if we will live simply and wisely; as the pursuits of the simpler nations are still the sports of the more artificial. It is not necessary that a man should earn his living by the sweat of his brow, unless he sweats easier than I do.

One young man of my acquaintance, who has inherited some acres, told me that he thought he should live as I did, *if he had the means.* I would not have any one adopt *my* mode of living on any account; for, beside that before he has fairly learned it I may have found out another for myself, I desire that there may be as many different persons in the world as possible; but I would have each one be very careful to find out and pursue *his own* way, and not his father's or his mother's or his neighbor's instead. The youth may build or plant or sail, only let him not be hindered from doing that which he tells me he would like to do. If he is reproved for being what he is, he will find his only resource in being

still more entirely what he is. Carry but yourself erect, and your garments will trail as they should. Disturb not the sailor with too many details, but let him be sure that he keep his guiding star in his eye. Everything impels us to seek our health. No doubt our instincts drive us forward in the right path, and keep us from wandering, — as faithful herdsmen do their herds. Whatever we covet is for our health. No student ever hurt his chest with writing poetry, — for that does not consist with a constrained position. No, — it was some vile copying or other drudgery that did the injury.[1] Some say that time is money. It is more than that; it is life; and whoever exchanges much of it for money, or what money can buy, makes a wretched bargain, and will be bankrupt in the end. It is by a mathematical point only that we are wise, as the sailor or the fugitive slave keeps the polestar in his eye; but that is sufficient guidance for all our life. We may not arrive at our port within a calculable period, but we would preserve the true course.

Yet I believe that in this case, what is true for one is truer still for a thousand, as a large house is not more expensive than a small one, in proportion to its size, since one roof may cover, one cellar underlie, and one wall separate several apartments. But for my part I preferred the solitary dwelling. Moreover, it will commonly be cheaper to build the whole yourself than to con-

[1] Apparently some aunt had been warning Thoreau that he must not stoop over his green desk so much. — F. B. S.

vince another of the advantage of the common wall; and when you have done this, the common partition, to be much cheaper, must be a thin one, and that other may prove a bad neighbor, and also not keep his side in repair.

The only co-operation which is commonly possible is exceedingly partial and superficial; and what little true co-operation there is, is as if it were not, being a harmony inaudible to men. If a man has faith, he will co-operate with equal faith everywhere; if he has not faith, he will continue to live like the rest of the world, whatever company he is joined to. To co-operate, in the highest as well as the lowest sense, means *to get our living together.*

I heard it proposed lately that two young men should travel together over the world, the one without money, earning his means as he went, before the mast and behind the plough, the other carrying a bill of exchange in his pocket. It was easy to see that they could not long be companions or co-operate, since one would not *operate* at all. They would part at the first interesting crisis in their adventures. Above all, as I have implied, the man who goes alone can start today; but he who travels with another must wait till that other is ready, and what with the weather and that other's convenience, it may be a long time before they get off.

But all this is very selfish, I have heard some of my townsmen say. I confess that I have hitherto indulged very little in philanthropic enterprises. I have made some sacrifices to a sense

of duty, and among others have sacrificed this pleasure also. There are those who have used all their arts to persuade me to undertake the support of some poor family in the town; and if I had nothing to do — for the devil finds employment for the idle — I might try my hand at some such pastime as that. However, when I have thought to indulge myself in this respect, and lay their Heaven under an obligation by maintaining certain poor persons in all respects as comfortably as I maintain myself, and have even ventured so far as to make them the offer, they have one and all unhesitatingly preferred to remain poor.

While my townsmen and women are devoted in so many ways to the good of their fellows, I trust that one at least may be spared to other and less humane pursuits. You must have a genius for charity as well as for anything else. As for Doing-good, that is one of the professions which are full. Moreover, I have tried it fairly, and, strange as it may seem, am satisfied that it does not agree with my constitution — it does not suit my genius — I have a natural repugnance to it. Probably I should not consciously and deliberately forsake my particular calling to do the good which society demands of me, to save the universe from annihilation; and I believe that a like but infinitely greater steadfastness elsewhere is all that now preserves it. But I would not stand between any man and his genius; and to him who does this work, which I decline, with his whole heart and soul and life, I would say, Persevere, even if the world

call it doing evil, as it is most likely they will.

"In antiquity," said Confucius, "those who devoted themselves to study, did it for themselves; now, those who devote themselves to study, do it for others;" as a commentator says, "to appear learned to the eyes of others." Now, it appears to me, those who devote themselves to charity, do it for others. There is no doctrine preached with so much cant in these days as this of doing good. I think that this word "cant," considering its meaning, should be derived not from the old "chant" at length come to be sung more through the nose; but rather from the contraction "can't" — the expression of inefficiency and despair.

Our manners have been corrupted by communication with the saints. Our hymn-books resound with a melodious cursing of God and enduring Him forever. One would say that even the prophets and redeemers had rather consoled the fears than confirmed the hopes of man. There is nowhere recorded a simple and irrepressible satisfaction with the gift of life, any memorable praise of God.

All health and success does me good, however far off and withdrawn it may appear; all disease and failure helps to make me sad and does me evil, however much sympathy it may have with me or I with it. If, then, we would indeed restore mankind by truly Indian, botanic, magnetic, or natural means, let us first be as simple and well as Nature ourselves, dispel the clouds which hang over our own brows, and take up a little

life into our pores, and encourage the flow of sap in our veins. Do not stay to be an overseer of the poor, but endeavor to become one of the worthies of the world.

Be assured that every man's success is in proportion to his *average* ability. The meadow flowers spring and bloom where the waters annually deposit their slime, — not where they reach in some freshet only. The truly noble and settled character of a man is not put forward, — as the king or conqueror does not march foremost in a procession. We may seem to do ourselves little credit in our own eyes; for our performance must always fall short of our aspiration and promise to ourselves, — as a stick will avail to *reach* further than it will strike effectively, — but we do not disappoint our neighbors. They indeed may affect to estimate us by our talents, but they really feel and know us by our character. A man is not his hope, nor his despair, — nor yet his past deed. The Past is in the rind, the Future in the core, and the Present between core and rind.

I read in the Gulistan, or Flower Garden, of Sheik Sadi of Shiraz, that "They asked a wise man, saying, Of the many celebrated trees which the Most High God has created lofty and umbrageous, they call none azad, or free, excepting the cypress, which bears no fruit; what mystery is there in this? He replied, Each has its appropriate produce, and appointed season, during the continuance of which it is fresh and blooming, and during their absence dry and withered; to neither of which states is the cypress exposed,

being always flourishing; and of this nature are the azads, or religious independents. — Fix not thy heart on that which is transitory; for the Dijlah, or Tigris, will continue to flow through Bagdad after the race of caliphs is extinct: if thy hand has plenty, be liberal as the date tree; but if it affords nothing to give away, be an azad, or free man, like the cypress."

COMPLEMENTAL VERSES

THE PRETENSIONS OF POVERTY

THOU dost presume too much, poor needy wretch,
To claime a station in the firmament
Because thy humble cottage, or thy tub,
Nurses some lazy or pedantic virtue
In the cheape sunshine or by shady springs,
With roots and pot-herbs; where thy right hand,
Tearing those humane passions from the mind,
Upon whose stocks faire blooming virtues flourish,
Degradeth Nature, and benumbeth sense,
And, Gorgon-like, turns active men to stone.
We not require the dull society
Of your necessitated temperance,
Or that unnatural stupidity
That knows nor joy nor sorrow; nor your forc'd
Falsely exhalted passive fortitude
Above the active. This low abject brood,
That fix their seats in mediocrity,
Become your servile minds; but we advance
Such virtues only as admit excess,
Brave, bounteous acts, regal magnificence,
All-seeing prudence, magnanimity
That knows no bound, and that heroic virtue
For which antiquity hath left no name,
But patterns only, such as Hercules,
Achilles, Theseus. Back to thy loath'd cell;
And when thou seest the new enlightened sphere,
Study to know but what those worthies were.

T. CAREW.

CHAPTER III — READING

With a little more deliberation in the choice of their pursuits, all men would perhaps become essentially students and observers, for certainly their nature and destiny are interesting to all alike. In accumulating property for ourselves or our posterity, in founding a family or a state, or acquiring fame even, we are mortal; but in dealing with truth we are immortal, and need fear no change nor accident. The oldest Egyptian or Hindoo philosopher raised a corner of the veil from the statue of the divinity; and still the trembling robe remains raised, and I gaze upon as fresh a glory as he did, since it was I in him that was then so bold, and it is he in me that now reviews the vision. No dust has settled on that robe; no time has elapsed since that divinity was revealed. That time which we really improve, or which is improvable, is neither past, present, nor future.

My residence was more favorable, not only to thought, but to serious reading, than a university; and though I was beyond the range of the ordinary circulating library, I had more than ever come within the influence of those books which circulate round the world, whose sentences were first written on bark, and are now merely copied from time to time on to linen paper. Says

the poet, Mir Camar Uddin Mast, "Being seated to run through the region of the spiritual world; I have had this advantage in books. To be intoxicated by a single glass of wine; I have experienced this pleasure when I have drunk the liquor of the esoteric doctrines."

I kept Homer's Iliad on my table through the summer, though I looked at his page only now and then. Incessant labor with my hands, at first, for I had my house to finish and my beans to hoe at the same time, made more study impossible. Yet I sustained myself by the prospect of such reading in future. Here, of course, I could read the Iliad, if I *would have* books, as well as in Ionia; and not wish myself in Boston or New York, in London or Rome. In such a place as this, rather, Homer lived and sang. I know that I am in good company; there is the world, its centre and metropolis; and all the palms of Asia and the laurels of Greece, and the firs of the Arctic zones incline hither.

Where is that lost first page of History? We have never found the literature that dated from an antiquity sufficiently remote. The most adventurous student seeks the remotest antiquity, — the history of a time (as it were) prior to Time. Or, if we prefer, we may say that such is the Protean character of things; he always interprets prophecies and oracles, and is interested solely in the future. I read one or two shallow books of travel in the intervals of my work, till that employment made me ashamed of myself, and I asked where it was then that *I* lived.

The student may read Homer or Æschylus in the original Greek without danger of dissipation or luxuriousness, for to do so implies that he should in some measure emulate their heroes, and consecrate morning hours to their pages. The heroic books, even if printed in the character of our mother tongue, will always be in a language dead to degenerate times; and we must laboriously seek the meaning of each word and line, conjecturing a larger sense than common use permits out of what wisdom and valor and generosity we have. The modern cheap and fertile press, with all its translations, has done little to bring us nearer to the heroic writers of antiquity. They seem as solitary, and the letter in which they are printed as rare and curious, as ever.

It is even worth the expense of youthful days and costly hours, if you learn only some words of an ancient language, which are raised out of the trivialness of the street, to be perpetual suggestions and provocations. It is not in vain that the farmer remembers and repeats the few Latin words which he has heard.

Men sometimes speak as if the study of the classics would at length make way for more modern and practical studies; but the adventurous student will always study classics, in whatever language they may be written, and however ancient they may be, for they have to be studied in the same spirit that we study Nature. They are to a great extent only valuable commentaries on her work, or in one sense, her own finest fruits — never ancient, and never modern. For what

are the classics but the noblest recorded thoughts of man? They are the only oracles which are not decayed, and there are such answers to the most modern inquiry in them as Delphi and Dodona could never have given. We might as well omit to study Nature because she is old.

To read well — that is, to read true books in a true spirit — is a noble exercise, and one that will task the reader more than any exercise which the customs of the day esteem. It requires a training such as the athletes underwent, the steady intention almost of the whole life to this object. Books must be read as deliberately and reservedly as they were written. It is not enough even to be able to speak the language of that nation by which they are written, for there is a memorable interval between the spoken and the written language, the language heard and the language read. The one is commonly transitory — a sound, a tongue, a dialect merely, almost brutish, and we learn it unconsciously, like the brutes, of our mothers. The other is the maturity and experience of that: if that is our mother tongue, this is our father tongue, a reserved and select expression, too significant to be heard by the ear, which we must be born again in order to speak.

The crowds of men who merely *spoke* the Greek and Latin tongues in the middle ages were not entitled by the accident of birth to *read* the works of genius written in those languages; for these were not written in that Greek or Latin which they knew, but in the select language of literature. They had not learned the nobler dialects of Greece and Rome, but the very materials on

which they were written were waste paper to them, and they prized instead a cheap contemporary literature.

But when the several nations of Europe had acquired distinct though rude written languages of their own, sufficient for the purposes of their rising literatures, then first learning revived, and scholars were enabled to discern from that remoteness the treasures of antiquity, and works of genius first began to be read, and perhaps found their truest and fittest audience when their language could no longer be spoken anywhere. What the Roman and Grecian multitude could not *hear*, after the lapse of ages a few scholars *read,* and a few scholars only are still reading it.

However much we may admire the orator's occasional bursts of eloquence, the noblest written words are commonly as far behind or above the fleeting spoken language as the firmament with its stars is behind the clouds. *There* are the stars, and they who can may read them. The astronomers forever comment on and observe them. They are not exhalations like our daily colloquies and vaporous breath. What is called eloquence in the forum is commonly found to be rhetoric in the study.

The orator yields to the inspiration of a transient occasion, and speaks to the mob before him, to those who can *hear* him; but the writer, whose more equable life is his occasion, and who would be distracted by the event and the crowd which inspire the orator, speaks to the intellect and heart of mankind, to all in any age who can *understand* him.

No wonder that Alexander carried the Iliad with him on his expeditions in a precious casket. A written word is the choicest of relics. It is something at once more intimate with us and more universal than any other work of art. It is the work of art nearest to life itself. It may be translated into every language, and not only be read but actually breathed from all human lips; — not be represented on canvas or in marble only, but be carved out of the breath of life itself. The symbol of an ancient man's thought becomes a modern man's speech.

Two thousand summers have imparted to the monuments of Grecian literature, as to her marbles, only a maturer golden and autumnal tint, for they have carried their own serene and celestial atmosphere into all lands to protect them against the corrosion of time. Books are the treasured wealth of the world and the fit inheritance of generations and nations. Books, the oldest and the best, stand naturally and rightfully on the shelves of every cottage. They do not have to plead their cause, but while they enlighten and sustain the reader his common sense will not refuse them. Their authors are a natural and irresistible aristocracy in every society, and, more than kings or emperors, exert an influence on mankind.

When the illiterate and perhaps scornful trader has earned by enterprise and industry his coveted leisure and independence, and is admitted to the circles of wealth and fashion, he turns inevitably at last to those still higher but yet inaccessible circles of intellect and genius, and is sensible only of the imperfection of his culture and the vanity

and insufficiency of all his riches, and further proves his good sense by the pains which he takes to secure for his children that intellectual culture whose want he so keenly feels; and thus it is that he becomes the founder of a family. And who shall say that the foundations of future genius are not thus laid? Because the poet is born a poet, does not prove that his ancestors have not contributed to make him such.

Those who have not learned to read the ancient classics in the language in which they were written must have a very imperfect knowledge of the history of the human race; for it is remarkable that no transcript of them has ever been made into any modern tongue, unless our civilization itself may be regarded as such a transcript. Homer has never yet been printed in English, nor Æschylus, nor Virgil even, — these great geniuses and wits who have rendered memorable a remote period of the world's history, now almost its early age, — works as refined, as solidly done, and as beautiful almost as the morning itself; for later writers, say what we will of their genius, have rarely, if ever, equalled the elaborate beauty and finish and the lifelong and heroic literary labors of the ancients. Nay, not one in many thousands, even of those who are said to have learned their language, have ever read them. They only talk of forgetting them who never knew them. It will be soon enough to forget them when we have the learning and the genius which will enable us to attend to and appreciate them.

That age will be rich indeed when those relics

which we call Classics, and the still older and more than classic but even less known Scriptures of the nations, shall have still further accumulated, when the Vaticans shall be filled with Vedas and Zendavestas and Bibles, with Homers and Dantes and Shakespeares, and all the centuries to come shall have successively deposited their trophies in the forum of the world. By such a pile we may hope to scale heaven at last.

The works of the great poets have never yet been read by mankind, for only great poets can read them. They have only been read as the multitude read the stars, at most astrologically, not astronomically. Most men have learned to read to serve a paltry convenience, as they have learned to cipher in order to keep accounts and not be cheated in trade; but of reading as a noble intellectual exercise they know little or nothing. Yet this only is reading, properly speaking — not that which lulls and soothes as a luxury, and suffers the nobler faculties to sleep the while, but what we have to stand on tiptoe to read and devote our most alert wakeful hours to — have to gird up our robes and train ourselves for — as the wrestler trained for the combat.

I think that having learned our letters we should read the best that is in literature, and not be forever repeating our a, b, abs, and words of one syllable, in the fourth and fifth classes, sitting on the lowest and foremost form all our lives. Most men are satisfied if they read or hear read, and perchance have been convicted by the wisdom of one good book, the Bible, and for the rest of their lives vegetate and dissipate their faculties

in what is called easy reading. There is a work in several volumes in our circulating library entitled *Little Reading,* which I thought referred to a town of that name which I had not been to.

There are those who, like cormorants and ostriches, can digest all sorts of this, even after the fullest dinner of meats and vegetables, for they suffer nothing to be wasted. If others are the machines to provide this provender, they are the machines to read it. They read the nine thousandth tale about Zebulon and Sephronia, and how they loved as none had ever loved before, and neither did the course of their true love run smooth—at any rate, how it did run and stumble, and get up again and go on! how some poor unfortunate got up on to a steeple, who had better never have gone up as far as the belfry; and then, having needlessly got him up there, the happy novelist rings the bell for all the world to come together and hear, O dear! how he did get down again!

For my part, I think that they had better metamorphose all such aspiring heroes of universal noveldom into man-weathercocks, as they used to put heroes among the constellations, and let them swing round there till they are rusty, and not come down at all to bother honest men with their pranks. The next time the novelist rings the bell I will not stir though the meeting-house burn down. "The Skip of the Tip-Toe-Hop, a Romance of the Middle Ages, by the celebrated author of 'Tittle-Tol-Tan,' to appear in monthly parts; a great rush; don't all come together." All this they read with saucer eyes, and erect

and primitive curiosity, and with unwearied gizzard, whose corrugations even yet need no sharpening, just as some little four-year-old bencher his two-cent gilt-covered edition of Cinderella, — without any improvement, that I can see, in the pronunciation, or accent, or emphasis, or any more skill in extracting or inserting the moral. The result is dulness of sight, a stagnation of the vital circulations, and a general deliquium and sloughing off of all the intellectual faculties. This sort of gingerbread is baked daily and more sedulously than pure wheat or rye-and-Indian in almost every oven, and finds a surer market.

The best books are not read even by those who are called good readers. What does our Concord culture amount to? There is in this town, with a very few exceptions, no taste for the best or for very good books even in English literature, whose words all can read and spell. Even the college-bred and so-called liberally educated men here and elsewhere have really little or no acquaintance with the English classics; and as for the recorded wisdom of mankind, the ancient classics and Bibles, which are accessible to all who will know of them, there are the feeblest efforts anywhere made to become acquainted with them.

I know a woodchopper, of middle age, who takes a French paper, not for news as he says, for he is above that, but to keep himself "in practice," he being a Canadian by birth; and when I ask him what he considers the best thing he can do in this world, he says, beside this, to

keep up and add to his English. This is about as much as the college-bred generally do or aspire to do, and they take an English paper for the purpose. One who has just come from reading perhaps one of the best English books will find how many with whom he can converse about it?

My woodchopper was from Nicollet away by the Trois Rivières and spoke English, as well as Canadian French.

Suppose one comes from reading a Greek or Latin classic in the original, whose praises are familiar even to the illiterate, — he will find nobody at all to speak to, but must keep silence about it. Indeed, there is hardly the professor in our colleges, who, if he has mastered the difficulties of the language, has proportionally mastered the difficulties of the wit and poetry of a Greek poet, and has any sympathy to impart to the alert and heroic reader; and as for the sacred Scriptures, or Bibles of mankind, who in this town can tell me even their titles? Most men do not know that any nation but the Hebrews have had a Scripture.

A man, any man, will go considerably out of his way to pick up a silver dollar; but here are golden words, which the wisest men of antiquity have uttered, and whose worth the wise of every succeeding age have assured us of; — and yet we learn to read only as far as Easy Reading, the primers and class-books, and when we leave school, the *Little Reading,* and story books, which are for boys and beginners; and our reading, our conversation and thinking, are all on a very low level, worthy only of pygmies and manikins.

I aspire to be acquainted with wiser men than this our Concord soil has produced, whose names are hardly known here. Or shall I hear the name of Plato and never read his book? As if Plato were my townsman and I never saw him — my next neighbor and I never heard him speak or attended to the wisdom of his words. But how actually is it? His Dialogues, which contain what was immortal in him, lie on the next shelf, and yet I never read them.

We are under-bred and low-lived and illiterate; and in this respect I confess I do not make any very broad distinction between the illiterateness of my townsmen who cannot read at all, and the illiterateness of him who has learned to read only what is for children and feeble intellects. We should be as good as the worthies of antiquity, but partly by first knowing how good they were. We are a race of tit-men, and soar but little higher in our intellectual flights than the columns of the daily paper.

It is not all books that are as dull as their readers. There are probably words addressed to our condition exactly, which, if we could really hear and understand, would be more salutary than the morning or the spring to our lives, and possibly put a new aspect on the face of things for us. How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book! The book exists for us perchance which will explain our miracles and reveal new ones. The at present unutterable things we may find somewhere uttered. These same questions that disturb and puzzle and confound us have in their turn oc-

curred to all the wise men; not one has been omitted; and each has answered them, according to his ability, by his words and his life. Moreover, with wisdom we shall learn liberality.

The solitary hired man on a farm in the outskirts of Concord, who has had his second birth and peculiar religious experience, and is driven as he believes into silent gravity and exclusiveness by his faith, may think it is not true; but Zoroaster, thousands of years ago, travelled the same road and had the same experience; but he, being wise, knew it to be universal, and treated his neighbors accordingly, and is even said to have invented and established worship among men. Let him humbly commune with Zoroaster, then, and, through the liberalizing influence of all the worthies, with Jesus Christ himself, — and let "our church" go by the board.

We boast that we belong to the nineteenth century, and are making the most rapid strides of any nation. But consider how little this village does for its own culture. I do not wish to flatter my townsmen, nor to be flattered by them, for that will advance neither of us. We need to be provoked, — goaded like oxen, as we are, into a trot. We have a comparatively decent system of common schools, schools for infants only; but excepting the half-starved Lyceum in the winter, and latterly the puny beginning of a library suggested by the State, no school for ourselves.[1]

[1] This was written in 1846 and published in 1854. At that time the Town Library was small, and the circle of

We spend more on almost any article of bodily aliment or ailment than on our mental aliment.

It is time we had uncommon schools, that we did not leave off our education when we begin to be men and women. It is time that villages were universities, and their elder inhabitants the fellows of universities, with leisure — if they are indeed so well off — to pursue liberal studies the rest of their lives. Shall the world be confined to one Paris or one Oxford forever? Cannot students be boarded here and get a liberal education under the skies of Concord? Can we not hire some Abelard to lecture to us? Alas! what with foddering the cattle and tending the store, we are kept from school too long, and our education is sadly neglected.

In this country the village should in some respects take the place of the nobleman of Europe. It should be the patron of the fine arts. It is rich enough. It wants only the magnanimity and refinement. It can spend money enough on such things as farmers and traders value, but it is thought Utopian to propose spending money for things which more intelligent men know to be of far more worth. This town has spent seventeen thousand dollars on a townhouse, thank fortune or politics! but probably it will not spend so much on living wit, the true meat to put into that shell, in a hundred years. The one hundred

poets and sages had not much influence on the people. The course of events changed all this, and Thoreau's reproaches are no longer true. Even in that day, the criticisms were extreme. The "Olive-Branch" was a Methodist weekly. — F. B. S.

and twenty-five dollars annually subscribed for a Lyceum in the winter is better spent than any other equal sum raised in the town. If we live in the nineteenth century, why should we not enjoy the advantages which the nineteenth century offers? Why should our life be in any respect provincial? If we will read newspapers, why not skip the gossip of Boston and take the best newspaper in the world at once? — not be sucking the pap of "neutral family" papers, or browsing "Olive-Branches" here in New England. Let the reports of all the learned societies come to us, and we will see if they know anything. Why should we leave it to Harper & Brothers and Redding & Co. to select our reading? As the nobleman of cultivated taste surrounds himself with whatever conduces to his culture — genius — learning — wit — books — paintings — statuary — music — philosophical instruments, and the like; so let the village do, — not stop short at a pedagogue, a parson, a sexton, a parish library, and three selectmen, because our pilgrim forefathers got through a cold winter once on a bleak rock with these.

To act collectively is according to the spirit of our institutions; and I am confident that, as our circumstances are more flourishing, our means are greater than the nobleman's. New England can hire all the wise men in the world to come and teach her, and board them round the while, and not be provincial at all. That is the *uncommon* school we want. Instead of noblemen, let us have noble villages of men. If it is necessary, omit one bridge over the river, go round a little there,

and throw one arch at least over the darker gulf of ignorance which surrounds us.

But while we are confined to books, though the most select and classic, and read only particular written languages, which are themselves but dialects and provincial, we are in danger of forgetting the language which all things and events, beast, bird, flower, morning and evening, speak originally and without metaphor, which alone is copious and standard, and an adequate expression of the meaning with which the universe is fraught; the language which the soul of a man hears, rather than his ears or understanding, and his divine instincts speak, rather than his tongue. With a more copious hearing or understanding of what is published, — the news ever fresh which the breezes waft to us, — the present languages and all that they express, or can express, will be forgotten.

Much is published, but little printed. The rays which stream through the shutter will be no longer remembered when the shutter is wholly removed. No method nor discipline can supersede the necessity of being forever on the alert. What is a course of history, or philosophy, or poetry, no matter how well selected, or the best society, or the most admirable routine of life, compared with the discipline of looking always at what is to be seen? Will you be a reader, a student merely, or a seer? Read your fate, see what is before you, and walk on into futurity.

I did not read books the first summer; I hoed beans. Nay, I often did better than this. There were times when I could not afford to sacrifice

the bloom of the present moment to any work, whether of the head or hands.

The[1] *quiet and wholesome atmosphere of my remote dwelling-place afforded me ample facility for training my mind, as well as cultivating the soil.*

I love a broad margin to my life. Sometimes in a *spring* morning, *when the season of work had not yet arrived, or later in the summer when it was already past, having performed my accustomed oblations,* I sat in my sunny doorway from EARLIEST DAWN till noon, rapt in a REVERIE, AMID the pines and hickories and sumachs, in undisturbed solitude and stillness, while the birds sang around *and* flitted NOISELESSLY through the house *over my head and out at the open window; otherwise in undisturbed solitude and stillness, except perchance when a bough fell to the ground broken by its own weight in my sumach grove, — when the atmosphere was filled with perfume, and every sound the key to unheard harmonies,* until by the SUN'S *rays* falling in at my window,

[1] The italics used on pp. 149–51 indicate new material added from the MSS. They are employed here for the purpose of illustrating a single one of the great number of places where the text of the original MS. was abbreviated in printing, — often to its obvious detriment. The small capitals indicate words changed; for example, SUN'S was printed, sun; EARLIEST DAWN was printed, sunrise; AMID was printed, amidst; NOISELESSLY was printed, noiseless, etc. It has not been deemed advisable to break up the harmony of the type-pages throughout by indicating the numerous changes and corrections, except in this particular instance, to serve as an example. — H. H. H.

or the noise of some traveller's wagon on the distant highway, I was reminded of the lapse of time. I *am sensible that I waxed and* grew in those INTERVALS AS corn *grows* in the night, and they were far better than any work of MY hands. They were not subtracted from my life, but so much over and above my usual allowance. I realized what the ORIENTAL PHILOSOPHERS MEANT by contemplation and the forsaking of works. *It was quite impossible to have performed anything, and wise persons would not propose that any deed should be substituted therefor. They were little intervals during which I journeyed, and anticipated other states of existence.*

For the most part, *indeed,* I minded not how the hours went. *I was accustomed to say to myself, — "Certainly I am not living that heroic life I had dreamed; and yet all my veins are full of life, and Nature whispers no reproach."* The day advanced, as if to light some work of mine; it was morning, and lo, now it is evening and nothing memorable is accomplished; *and I defer to others in my thought, as if there were somewhere busier men. Yet my nature is almost content with this. What are these pines and these birds about? What is this pond a-doing? I must know a little more and be forever ready. My own thought would run upon my labor, mainly, or rather, where it pleased, and I had not leisure to drill myself. I only read one sentence of Homer to a week of hoeing; as, for instance, how Ajax struggled with the Trojans to ward off fire from the ships of the Greeks; while*

Patroclus was supplicating Achilles for his armor and his Myrmidons. —

Thus they were speaking such words to one another.
But Ajax no longer stood his ground; for he was compelled by weapons;
The will of Zeus subdued him, and illustrious Trojans,
Smiting; and his bright helmet being struck
And a terrible clang about his temples, and he was struck incessantly
Upon his well-made [visor];[1] *he was wounded in his left shoulder,*
Always holding firm his variegated shield; nor were they able
Around to stagger him, striving with their weapons;
But all the while he breathed with difficulty, and much sweat
Ran down on every side from his limbs, nor had he any
Chance to breathe; but on every side misfortune was riveted to misfortune.

I read no more than this at once, still remembering and repeating it; but I imagined more things than are in Homer while I hoed.

Instead of singing like the birds, I silently smiled at my incessant good fortune. As the sparrow had its trill, sitting on the hickory before my door, so had I my chuckle or suppressed warble which he might hear out of my nest. My

[1] This is doubtless Thoreau's own translation from the Greek. *Phalara,* a word but once used in Homer, and not settled in meaning; probably a projecting "visor" under the crest, and not the "cheek-pieces," although the side-pieces may have been attached to it, — whence the plural form, from "phalos." Thoreau left the word blank, perhaps not being able to settle in his own mind, amid the strife of the scholiasts, what part of the helmet it was. — F. B. S.

days were not days of the week, bearing the stamp of any heathen deity, nor were they minced into hours and fretted by the ticking of a clock; for I lived like the Puri Indians, of whom it is said that "for yesterday, today, and tomorrow they have only one word, and they express the variety of meaning by pointing backward for yesterday, forward for tomorrow, and overhead for the passing day."

This was sheer idleness to my fellow-townsmen, no doubt; but if the birds and flowers had tried me by their standard, I should not have been found wanting. A man must find his occasions in himself, it is true. The natural day is very calm, and will hardly reprove his indolence.

I had this advantage, at least, in my mode of life, over those who were obliged to look abroad for amusement, to society and the theatre, that my life itself was become my amusement and never ceased to be novel. It was a drama of many scenes and without an end.

If we were always indeed getting our living, and regulating our lives according to the last and best mode we had learned, we should never be troubled with ennui. Follow your genius closely enough, and it will not fail to show you a fresh prospect every hour.

Housework was a pleasant pastime. When my floor was dirty, I rose early, and, setting all my furniture out of doors on the grass, bed and bedstead making but one budget, dashed water on the floor, and sprinkled white sand from the pond on it, and then with a broom scrubbed it clean and white; and by the time the villagers

had broken their fast the morning sun had dried my house sufficiently to allow me to move in again, and my meditations were almost uninterrupted. It was pleasant to see my whole household effects out on the grass, making a little pile like a gypsy's pack, and my three-legged table, from which I did not remove the books and pen and ink, standing amid the pines and hickories. They seemed glad to get out themselves, and as if unwilling to be brought in. I was sometimes tempted to stretch an awning over them and take my seat there. It was worth the while to see the sun shine on these things, and hear the free wind blow on them; so much more interesting most familiar objects look out of doors than in the house.

A bird sits on the next bough, life-everlasting grows under the table, and blackberry vines run round its legs; pine cones, chestnut burs, and strawberry leaves are strewn about. It looked as if this was the way these forms came to be transferred to our furniture, to tables, chairs, and bedsteads — because they once stood in their midst.

CHAPTER IV — SOUNDS

My house was on the side of a hill, immediately on the edge of the larger wood, in the midst of a young forest of pitch pines and hickories, and half a dozen rods from the pond, to which a narrow footpath led down the hill. In my front yard grew the strawberry, blackberry, and life-everlasting, johnswort and golden-rod, shrub-oaks and sand-cherry, blueberry and ground-nut.

Near the end of May, the sand-cherry (*Cerasus pumila*) adorned the sides of the path with its delicate flowers arranged in umbels cylindrically about its short stems, which last, in the fall, weighed down with good-sized and handsome cherries, fell over in wreaths like rays on every side. I tasted them out of compliment to Nature, though they were scarcely palatable.

The sumach (*Rhus glabra*) grew luxuriantly about the house, pushing up through the embankment which I had made, and growing five or six feet the first season. Its broad pinnate tropical leaf was pleasant though strange to look on. The large buds, suddenly pushing out late in the spring from dry sticks which had seemed to be dead, developed themselves as by magic into graceful green and tender boughs, an inch in diameter; and sometimes, as I sat at my window, so heedlessly did they grow and tax their weak joints,

I heard a fresh and tender bough suddenly fall like a fan to the ground, when there was not a breath of air stirring, broken off at its foot by its own weight. In August the large masses of berries, which, when in flower, had attracted many wild bees to my house, gradually assumed their bright velvety crimson hue, and by their weight again bent down and broke the tender limbs.

As I sit at my window this summer afternoon, like a priest of Isis, and the phenomena of 3000 years ago still unimpaired, the hawks are circling about my clearing; and tantivy of wild pigeons, — an ancient race of birds — flying by twos and threes athwart my view, or perching restless on the white-pine boughs behind my house, gives a voice to the air; a fishhawk dimples the glassy surface of the pond and brings up a fish; a mink steals out of the marsh before my door and seizes a frog by the shore; the sedge is bending under the weight of the reed-birds flitting hither and thither; and for the last half hour I have heard the rattle of railroad cars, now dying away and then reviving like the beat of a partridge, conveying travellers from Boston to the country, — or the faint rattle and tinkle which mark the passage of a carriage or train along the distant highway, — for I did not live in such an outlandishly out-of-the-way place as that boy, who, as I hear, was put out to a farmer in the east part of the town, but ere long ran away and came home again, quite down at the heel and homesick. He had never seen such a dull and out-of-the-way place; the folks were all gone off; why, you

could n't even hear the whistle! I doubt if there is such a place in Massachusetts now: —

> In truth, our village has become a butt
> For one of those fleet railroad shafts, and o'er
> Our peaceful plain its soothing sound is — Concord.

The Fitchburg Railroad touches the pond about a hundred rods south of where I dwell. I usually go to the village along its causeway, and am, as it were, related to society by this link. The men on the freight trains, who go over the whole length of the road, bow to me as to an old acquaintance, they pass me so often, and apparently they take me for an employee; and so I am. I too would fain be a track-repairer somewhere in the orbit of the earth.

The whistle of the locomotive penetrates my woods summer and winter, sounding like the scream of a hawk sailing over some farmer's yard; informing me that many restless city merchants are arriving within the circle of the town, or adventurous country traders from the other side. As they come under one horizon, they shout their warning to get off the track to the other, — heard sometimes through the circles of two towns. Here come your groceries, country; your rations, countrymen! Nor is there any man so independent on his farm that he can say them nay. And here 's your pay for them! screams the countryman's whistle; timber, like long battering-rams, going twenty miles an hour against the city's walls; and chairs enough to seat all the weary and heavy-laden that dwell within them. With such huge and lumbering civility the country hands a

chair to the city. All the Indian huckleberry hills are stript, all the cranberry meadows are raked into the city. Up comes the cotton, down goes the woven cloth; up comes the silk, down goes the woollen; up come the books, — but down goes the wit that writes them.

When I meet the engine with its train of cars, moving off with planetary motion, — or rather, like a comet, for the beholder knows not if, with that velocity and with that direction, it will ever re-visit this system, — since its orbit does not look like a returning curve, — with its steam-cloud like a banner streaming behind in golden and silver wreaths, like many a downy cloud which I have seen high in the heavens, unfolding its masses to the light, — as if this travelling demigod, this cloud-compeller, would ere long take the sunset sky for the livery of his train; when I hear the iron horse make the hills echo with his snort, like thunder, shaking the earth with his feet, and breathing fire and smoke from his nostrils (what kind of winged horse or fiery dragon they will put into the new Mythology I don't know), — it seems as if the earth had now got a race worthy to inhabit it.

If all were as it seems, and made the elements their servants for noble ends! If the cloud that hangs over the engine were the perspiration of heroic deeds, or as beneficent to men as that which hovers over the farmer's fields, then the elements and Nature herself would cheerfully accompany men on their errands, and be their escort.

I watch the passage of the morning cars with the same feeling that I do the rising of the sun,

which is hardly more regular. Their train of clouds, stretching far behind, and rising higher and higher, — going to Heaven while the cars are going to Boston, — conceals the sun for a minute and casts my distant field into the shade,—a celestial train, beside which the petty train of cars which hugs the earth is but the barb of the spear.

The stabler of the iron horse was up early this winter morning by the light of the stars, amid the mountains, to fodder and harness his steed. Fire, too, was awakened thus early, to put the vital heat in him and get him off. If the enterprise were as innocent as it is early! If the snow lies deep, they strap on his snow-shoes, and with the giant plow, plow a furrow from the mountains to the seaboard, in which the cars, like a following drill-barrow, sprinkle all the restless men and floating merchandise in the country for seed. All day the fire-steed flies over the country, stopping only that his master may rest; and I am awakened by his tramp and defiant snort at midnight; when in some remote glen in the woods he fronts the elements incased in ice and snow;[1] and he will reach his stall only with the morning star, — to start once more on his travels without rest or slumber. Or perchance at evening I hear him in his stable blowing off the superfluous energy of the day, that he may

[1] Such a glen is in the woods south-east of Thoreau's hut, where the drifted snow sometimes stopped the heavy trains with light engines of that early period of railroading; for the Fitchburg and Cheshire roads were opened but two or three years before Thoreau went to Walden. — F. B. S.

calm his nerves and cool his liver and brain for a few hours of iron slumber. If the enterprise were as heroic and commanding as it is protracted and unwearied!

Far through unfrequented woods on the confines of towns, where once only the hunter penetrated by day, in the darkest night dart these bright saloons without the knowledge of their inhabitants; this moment stopping at some brilliant station-house in town or city, where a social crowd is gathered, the next in the Dismal Swamp, scaring the owl and fox. The startings and arrivals of the cars are now the epochs in the village day. They go and come with such regularity and precision, and their whistle can be heard so far, that the farmers set their clocks by them, and thus one well-conducted institution regulates a whole country.

Have not men improved somewhat in punctuality since the railroad was invented? Do they not talk and think faster in the depot than they did in the stage-office? There is something electrifying in the atmosphere of the former place. I have been astonished at the miracles it has wrought; that some of my neighbors, who, I should have prophesied, once for all, would never get to Boston by so prompt a conveyance, are on hand when the bell rings. To do things "railroad fashion" is now the by-word; and it is worth the while to be warned so often and so sincerely by any power to get off its track. There is no stopping to read the riot act, no firing over the heads of the mob, in this case. We have constructed a fate, an *Atropos,* that never turns

aside. (Let that be the name of your engine.) Men are advertised that at a certain hour and minute these bolts will be shot toward particular points of the compass; yet it interferes with no man's business, and the children go to school on the other track. We live the steadier for it. We are all educated thus to be sons of Tell. The air is full of invisible bolts. Every path but your own is the path of fate. Keep on your own track, then.

What recommends commerce to me is its enterprise and bravery. It does not clasp its hands and pray to Jupiter. I see these men every day go about their business with more or less courage and content, doing more even than they suspect, and perchance better employed than they could have consciously devised. I am less affected by their heroism who stood up for half an hour in the front line at Buena Vista, than by the steady and cheerful valor of the men who inhabit the snow-plow for their winter quarters; who have not merely the three o'clock in the morning courage, which Bonaparte thought was the rarest, but whose courage does not go to rest so early, who go to sleep only when the storm sleeps or the sinews of their iron steed are frozen.

On this morning of the Great Snow, perchance, which is still raging and chilling men's blood, I hear the muffled tone of their engine bell from out the fog bank of their chilled breath, which announces that the cars *are coming,* without long delay, notwithstanding the veto of a New England north-east snow-storm, and I behold the ploughmen covered with snow and rime, their heads peering above the mouldboard which is

turning down other than daisies and the nests of field-mice, like boulders of the Sierra Nevada, that occupy an outside place in the universe.

Commerce is unexpectedly confident and serene, alert, adventurous, and unwearied. It is very natural in its methods withal, far more so than many fantastic enterprises and sentimental experiments, and hence its singular success. I am refreshed and expanded when the freight train rattles past me, and I smell the stores which go dispensing their odors all the way from Long Wharf to Lake Champlain, reminding me of foreign parts, of coral reefs, and Indian oceans, and tropical climes, and the extent of the globe. I feel more like a citizen of the world at the sight of the palm-leaf which will cover so many flaxen New England heads the next summer, the Manilla hemp and cocoa-nut husks, the old junk, gunny bags, scrap iron, and rusty nails. This car-load of torn sails is more legible and interesting now than if they should be wrought into paper and printed books. Who can write so graphically the history of the storms they have weathered as these rents have done? They are proof-sheets which need no correction.

Here goes lumber from the Maine woods, which did not go out to sea in the last freshet, risen four dollars on the thousand because of what did go out or was split up; pine, spruce, cedar — first, second, third, and fourth qualities, so lately all of one quality, to wave over the bear, and moose, and caribou. Next rolls Thomaston lime, a prime lot, which will get far among the hills before it gets slacked. These rags in bales, of all

hues and qualities, the lowest condition to which cotton and linen descend, the final result of dress — of patterns which are now no longer cried up, unless it be in Milwaukee, as those splendid articles, English, French, or American prints, ginghams, muslins, etc. — gathered from all quarters both of fashion and poverty, going to become paper of one color or a few shades only, on which, forsooth, will be written tales of real life, high and low, and founded on fact!

This closed car smells of salt fish, the strong New England and commercial scent, reminding me of the Grand Banks and the fisheries. Who has not seen a salt fish, thoroughly cured for this world, so that nothing can spoil it, and putting the perseverance of the saints to the blush? with which you may sweep or pave the streets, and split your kindlings, and the teamster shelter himself and his lading against sun, wind, and rain behind it — and the trader, as a Concord trader [1] once did, hang it up by his door for a sign when he commences business, until at last his oldest customer cannot tell surely whether it be animal, vegetable, or mineral, and yet it shall be as pure as a snowflake, and if it be put into a pot and boiled, will come out an excellent dun fish for a Saturday's dinner.

Next, Spanish hides, with the tails still preserving their twist and the angle of elevation they had when the oxen that wore them were careering over the pampas of the Spanish main — a type of

[1] This was Deacon Parkman, in whose old house the Thoreaus were living shortly before Henry went to Walden.

all obstinacy, and evincing how almost hopeless and incurable are all constitutional vices. I confess that, practically speaking, when I have learned a man's real disposition, I have no hopes of changing it for the better or worse in this state of existence. As the Orientals say, "A cur's tail may be warmed, and pressed, and bound round with ligatures, and after a twelve years' labor bestowed upon it, still it will retain its natural form." The only effectual cure for such inveteracies as these tails exhibit is to make glue of them, which I believe is what is usually done with them, and then they will stay put and stick.

Here is a hogshead of molasses or of brandy directed to John Smith, Cuttingsville, Vermont, some trader among the Green Mountains, who imports for the farmers near his clearing, and now perchance stands over his bulk-head and thinks of the last arrivals on the coast, how they may affect the price for him, telling his customers this moment, as he has told them twenty times before this morning, that he expects some by the next train of prime quality. It is advertised in the Cuttingsville Times.

While these things go up other things come down. Warned by the whizzing sound, I look up from my book and see some tall pine, hewn on far northern hills, which has winged its way over the Green Mountains and the Connecticut, shot like an arrow through the township within ten minutes, and scarce another eye beholds it; going —

"to be the mast
Of some great ammiral."

And hark! here comes the cattle-train from the other side, bearing the cattle of a thousand hills, sheepcots, stables, and cow-yards in the air, — drovers with their sticks, and shepherd boys in the midst of their flocks — all but the mountain pastures whirled along like leaves blown from the mountains by the September gales. The air is filled with the bleating of calves and sheep, and the hustling of oxen, as if a pastoral valley was going by.

When the old bell-wether at the head rattles his bell, the mountains do indeed skip like rams and the little hills like lambs. A car-load of drovers, too, in the midst, on a level with their droves now, their vocation gone, but still clinging to their useless sticks as their badge of office. But their dogs, where are they? It is a stampede to them; they are quite thrown out; they have lost the scent. Methinks I hear them barking behind the Peterboro' Hills, or panting up the western slope of the Green Mountains. They will not be in at the death. Their vocation, too, is gone. Their fidelity and sagacity are below par now. They will slink back to their kennels in disgrace, or perchance run wild and strike a league with the wolf and the fox. So is your pastoral life whirled past and away. But the bell rings, and I must get off the track and let the cars go by —

> What's the railroad to me?
> I never go to see
> Where it ends.
> It fills a few hollows,
> And makes banks for the swallows,
> It sets the sand a-blowing,
> And the blackberries a-growing,

but I cross it like a cart-path in the woods. I will not have my eyes put out and my ears spoiled by its smoke and steam and hissing.

Now that the cars are gone by and all the restless world with them, and the fishes in the pond no longer feel their rumbling, I am more alone than ever. For the rest of the long afternoon, perhaps, my meditations are interrupted only by the faint rattle of a carriage or team along the distant highway.

Sometimes, on Sundays, I heard the bells, — the Lincoln, Acton, Bedford, or Concord bell, when the wind was favorable, — a faint, sweet, and, as it were, natural melody or invention, worth importing into the wilderness. Nature seemed to undulate to their measure, —

> Now up they go, ding,
> Then down they go, dong,
> And awhile they swing
> To the same old song:
> Then changed is their measure to tone upon tone,
> And seldom it is that one sound comes alone;
> For they ring out their peals in a mingled throng,
> And the breezes waft the loud ding-dong along:
> And the metal goes round at a single bound,
> A-lulling the fields with its measured sound,
> Till the tired tongue falls with a lengthened boom,
> As solemn and loud as the crack of doom.[1]

[1] Thoreau had reason to know what were the gyrations and vibrations of the village bell; for he had often pulled the rope to ring one or another of the four bells in the village, — the Unitarian bell, the Orthodox bell, the bell of the county court house, and the school bell. In August, 1844, he had rung the court bell to call together Emerson's Emancipation audience. — F. B. S.

At a sufficient distance over the woods this sound acquires a certain vibratory hum, as if the pine needles in the horizon were the strings of a harp which it swept, and is far more memorable than its singing near at hand. All sound heard at the greatest possible distance produces one and the same effect, a vibration of the universal lyre, just as the intervening atmosphere makes a distant ridge of earth interesting to our eyes by the azure tint it imparts to it.

There came to me in this case a melody which the air had strained, and which had conversed with every leaf and needle of the wood, that portion of the sound which the elements had taken up and modulated and echoed from vale to vale. The echo is, to some extent, an original sound, and therein is the magic and charm of it. It is not merely a repetition of what was worth repeating in the bell, but partly the voice of the wood, the same trivial words and notes sung by a wood-nymph.

At evening, the distant lowing of some cow in the horizon beyond the woods sounded sweet and melodious, and at first I would mistake it for the voices of certain minstrels by whom I was sometimes serenaded, who might be straying over hill and dale; but soon I was not unpleasantly disappointed when it was prolonged into the natural and withal cheap-toned music of the cow. I do not mean to be satirical, but to express my appreciation of those youths' singing, when I state that I perceived clearly that it was akin to the music of the cow, and they were, at length, one articulation of Nature. Sound was not made

so much for convenience that we might hear when called, as to regale the sense, and fill one of the avenues of life.

Regularly at half-past seven, in one part of the summer, after the evening train had gone by, the whippoorwills chanted their vespers for half an hour, sitting on a stump by my door, or upon the ridgepole of the house. They would begin to sing with almost as much precision as a clock, within five minutes of a particular time (referred to the setting of the sun) every evening. They also sang at intervals throughout the night, and were again as musical as ever just before and about dawn. I had a rare opportunity to become acquainted with their habits. Sometimes I heard four or five at once in different parts of the wood, one a bar behind another, and so near me that I distinguished not only the cluck after each note, but often that singular buzzing sound (which I have not seen described, — to be compared with nothing I can think of), like a fly in a spider's web, only proportionally louder. Sometimes one would circle round and round me in the woods a few feet distant as if tethered by a string, when probably I was near its eggs.

When other birds are still the screech-owls take up the strain, like mourning women their ancient u-lu-lu. Their dismal scream is truly Ben Jonsonian. Wise midnight hags! It is no honest and blunt tu-whit tu-who of the poets, but, without jesting, a most solemn graveyard ditty, the mutual consolations of suicide lovers remembering the pangs and the delights of supernal love in the infernal groves. Yet I love to hear their

wailing, their doleful responses, trilled along the woodside; reminding me sometimes of music and singing birds; as if it were the dark and tearful side of music, the regrets and sighs that would fain be sung. They are the spirits, the low spirits and melancholy forebodings, of fallen souls that once in human shape night-walked the earth and did the deeds of darkness, now expiating their sins with their wailing hymns or threnodies in the scenery of their transgressions. They give me a new sense of the variety and capacity of that nature which is our common dwelling. *Oh-o-o-o-o that I never had been bor-r-r-r-n!* sighs one on this side of the pond, and circles with the restlessness of despair to some new perch on the gray oak. Then — *That I never had been bor-r-r-r-n!* echoes another on the farther side with tremulous sincerity, and — *bor-r-r-r-n!* comes faintly from far in the Lincoln woods.

I was also serenaded by the hooting owl. Near at hand you could fancy it the most melancholy sound in Nature, as if she meant by this to stereotype and make permanent in her choir the dying moans of a human being — some poor weak relic of mortality who has left hope behind, and howls like an animal, yet with human sobs, on entering the dark valley, made more awful by a certain gurgling melodiousness, — I find myself beginning with the letters *gl* when I try to imitate it, — expressive of a mind which has reached the liquid gelatinous mildewy stage in the mortification of all healthy and courageous thought. It reminded me of ghouls and idiots and insane howlings. But now one answers from far woods

in a strain made really melodious by distance, — *Hoo hoo hoo, hoorer hoo;* and indeed for the most part it suggested only pleasing associations, whether heard by day or night, summer or winter.

I rejoice that there are owls. Let them do the idiotic and maniacal hooting for men. It is a sound admirably suited to swamps and twilight woods which no day illustrates, suggesting a vast and undeveloped nature which men have not recognized. They represent the stark twilight and unsatisfied thoughts which all have. All day the sun has shone on the surface of some savage swamp, where the single spruce stands hung with usnea lichens, and small hawks circulate above, and the chickadee lisps amid the evergreens, and the partridge and rabbit skulk beneath; but now a more dismal and fitting day dawns, and a different race of creatures awakes to express the meaning of Nature there.

Late in the evening I heard the distant rumbling of wagons over bridges, — a sound heard farther than almost any other at night, — the baying of dogs, and sometimes again the lowing of some disconsolate cow in a distant barn-yard. In the meanwhile all the shore rang with the trump of bullfrogs, the sturdy spirits of ancient wine-bibbers and wassailers, still unrepentant, trying to sing a catch in their Stygian lake, — if the Walden nymphs will pardon the comparison, for though there are almost no weeds, there were frogs in the pond, who would fain keep up the hilarious rules of their old festal tables, though their voices have waxed hoarse and solemnly

grave, mocking at mirth; and the wine has lost its flavor, and become only liquor to distend their paunches; and sweet intoxication never comes to drown the memory of the past, but mere saturation and waterloggedness and distention. The most aldermanic, with his chin upon a heart-leaf, which serves for a napkin to his drooling chaps, under this northern shore quaffs a deep draught of the once scorned water, and passes round a cup with the ejaculation *tr-r-r-oonk, tr-r-r-oonk, tr-r-r-oonk!* and straightway comes over the water from some distant cove the same password repeated, where the next in seniority and girth has gulped down to his mark; and when this observance has made the circuit of the shores, then ejaculates the master of ceremonies, with satisfaction, *tr-r-r-oonk!* and each in his turn repeats the same down to the least distended, leakiest, and flabbiest paunched, that there be no mistake; and then the bowl goes round again and again, until the sun disperses the morning mist, and only the patriarch is not under the pond, but vainly bellowing *troonk* from time to time, and pausing for a reply.

I am not sure that I ever heard the sound of cock-crowing from my clearing, and I thought that it might be worth the while to keep a cockerel for his music merely, as a singing bird. If they could be naturalized without being domesticated, it would soon become the most famous sound in our woods, surpassing the clangor of the goose and the hooting of the owl; and then imagine the cackling of the hens to fill the pauses when their lords' clarions rested! No wonder that man

added this bird to his tame stock — to say nothing of the eggs and drumsticks.

To walk in a winter morning in a wood where these birds abounded, their native woods, and hear the wild cockerels crow on the trees, clear and shrill for miles over the resounding earth, drowning the feebler notes of other birds — think of it! It would put nations on the alert. Who would not be early to rise, and rise earlier and earlier every successive day of his life, till he became unspeakably healthy, wealthy, and wise?

All climates agree with brave Chanticleer. He is more indigenous than the natives. But this faint clarion did not penetrate my woods. His health is ever good, his lungs are sound, his spirits never flag. I was perhaps the only inhabitant of Concord, or of the State, who did not hear the cock crow.[1] Even the sailor on the Atlantic and Pacific is awakened by his voice; but its shrill sound never roused me from my slumbers. Not even rats in the wall, for they were starved out, or rather were never baited in, — only squirrels on the roof and under the floor, a whippoorwill on the ridgepole, a blue-jay screaming beneath the window, a hare or woodchuck under the house, a screech-owl or a cat-owl behind it, a flock of wild geese or a laughing loon on the pond, and a fox to bark in the night. Not even a lark or an oriole, those mild plantation birds, ever visited my clearing. No cockerels to crow nor hens to cackle in the yard. No yard!

[1] See p. 22, Vol. II, for further remarks about cock-crowing.

but unfenced Nature reaching up to your very sills. A young forest growing up under your windows, and wild sumachs and blackberry vines breaking through into your cellar; sturdy pitch-pines rubbing and creaking against the shingles for want of room, their roots reaching quite under the house. Instead of a scuttle or a blind blown off in the gale, — a pine tree snapped off or torn up by the roots behind your house, for fuel. Instead of no path to the front-yard gate in the Great Snow, — no gate — no front-yard, — and no path to the civilized world![1]

[1] At some point in the course of this chapter, not specially indicated in the MSS., Thoreau omitted this passage: —

"I am glad to remember, as I sit by my door, that I, too, am a remote descendant of a heroic race of men, of whom there is tradition; in one sense a fellow-wanderer and survivor of Ulysses, for instance. My life passes amid the pines of New England. The pitch pine grows before my door, — unlike any symbol I have seen sculptured or painted. Where are the heroes whose exploits shall appear to posterity sculptured on monuments amid such natural forms as these? as we see heroes and demigods amid the lotuses and palms of the East. What new marks shall *we* add to the Red Pipestone Quarry?"

This appears to have been the contents of a Journal page (numbered 43) written while Thoreau was at Walden, but for which he hardly found a suitable place in the volume when he edited it for printing. It stands, however, on the same four-page sheet which contains the recorded sights and sounds of a summer afternoon, — the hawks, wild pigeons, reed-birds, rattle of railroad cars, etc., near the beginning of this chapter. — F. B. S.

CHAPTER V — SOLITUDE

THIS is a delicious evening, when the whole body is one sense, and imbibes delight through every pore. I go and come with a strange liberty in Nature, a part of herself. As I walk along the stony shore of the pond in my shirt-sleeves, though it is cool as well as cloudy and windy, and I see nothing special to attract me, all the elements are unusually congenial to me.

The bullfrogs trump to usher in the night, and the note of the whippoorwill is borne on the rippling wind from over the water. Sympathy with the fluttering alder and poplar leaves almost takes away my breath; yet, like the lake, my serenity is rippled but not ruffled. These small waves raised by the evening wind are as remote from storm as the smooth reflecting surface. Though it is now dark, the wind still blows and roars in the wood, the waves still dash, and some creatures lull the rest with their notes.

The repose is never complete. The wildest animals do not repose, but seek their prey now; the fox, and skunk, and rabbit, now roam the fields and woods without fear. They are Nature's watchmen, — links which connect the days of animated life.

When I return to my house I find that visitors have been there and left their cards, either a

bunch of flowers, or a wreath of evergreen, or a name in pencil on a yellow walnut leaf or a chip. Those who come rarely to the woods take some little piece of the forest into their hands to play with by the way, which they leave, either intentionally or accidentally. One has peeled a willow wand, woven it into a ring, and dropped it on my table. I could always tell if visitors had called in my absence, either by the bended twigs or grass, or the print of their shoes, and generally of what sex or age or quality they were by some slight trace left, as a flower dropped, or a bunch of grass plucked and thrown away, even as far off as the railroad, half a mile distant, or by the lingering odor of a cigar or pipe. Nay, I was frequently notified of the passage of a traveller along the highway sixty rods off by the scent of his pipe. Indeed, my senses were as acute as those of the Indian in this respect, and I saw how his habits of observation were cultivated.

There is commonly sufficient space about us. Our horizon is never quite at our elbows. The thick wood is not just at our door, nor the pond, but somewhat is always clearing, familiar and worn by us, appropriated and fenced in some way, and reclaimed from Nature. For what reason have I this vast range and circuit, some square miles of unfrequented forest, for my privacy, abandoned to me by men? My nearest neighbor is a mile distant, and no house is visible from any place but the hill-tops within half a mile of my own. I have my horizon bounded by woods all to myself; a distant view of the railroad

where it touches the pond on the one hand, and of the fence which skirts the woodland road on the other. But for the most part it is as solitary where I live as on the prairies. It is as much Asia or Africa as New England. I have, as it were, my own sun, and moon, and stars, and a little world all to myself.

At night there was never a traveller passed my house, or knocked at my door, more than if I were the first or last man, unless it were in the spring, when at long intervals some came from the village to fish for pouts in the pond, — they plainly fished much more in the Walden Pond of their own natures, and baited their hooks with darkness — but they soon retreated, usually with light baskets, and left "the world to darkness and to me," and the black kernel of the night was never profaned by any human neighborhood.

I believe that men are generally still a little afraid of the dark, though the witches are all hung, and Christianity and candles have been introduced.

Yet I experienced sometimes that the most sweet and tender, the most innocent and encouraging society may be found in any natural object, even for the poor misanthrope and most melancholy man. There can be no very black melancholy to him who lives in the midst of Nature and has his senses still. There was never yet such a storm but it was Æolian music to a healthy and innocent ear. Nothing can rightly compel a simple and brave man to a vulgar sadness. While I enjoy the friendship of the seasons I trust that nothing can make life a burden to me.

The gentle rain which waters my beans and keeps me in the house today is not drear and melancholy, but good for me too. Though it prevents my hoeing them, it is of far more worth than my hoeing. If it should continue so long as to cause the seeds to rot in the ground and destroy the potatoes in the lowlands, it would still be good for the grass on the uplands, and, being good for the grass, it would be good for me.

Sometimes, when I compare myself with other men, it seems as if I were more favored by the gods than they, beyond any deserts that I am conscious of; as if I had a warrant and surety at their hands which my fellows have not, and were especially guided and guarded. I do not flatter myself, but if it be possible they flatter me. I have never felt lonesome, or in the least oppressed by a sense of solitude, but once, and that was a few weeks after I came to the woods, when, for an hour, I doubted if the near neighborhood of man was not essential to a serene and healthy life. To be alone was something unpleasant. But I was at the same time conscious of a slight insanity in my mood, and seemed to foresee my recovery. In the midst of a gentle rain, while these thoughts prevailed, I was suddenly sensible of such sweet and beneficent society in Nature, in the very pattering of the drops, and in every sound and sight around my house, an infinite and unaccountable friendliness all at once like an atmosphere sustaining me, as made the fancied advantages of human neighborhood insignificant, and I have never thought of them since. Every

little pine needle expanded and swelled with sympathy, and befriended me. I was so distinctly made aware of the presence of something kindred to me, even in scenes which we are accustomed to call wild and dreary, and also that the nearest of blood to me and humanest was not a person nor a villager, that I thought no place could ever be strange to me again. —

> " Mourning untimely consumes the sad;
> Few are their days in the land of the living,
> Beautiful daughter of Toscar."

Some of my pleasantest hours were during the long rain storms in the spring or fall, which confined me to the house for the afternoon as well as the forenoon, soothed by their ceaseless roar and pelting; when an early twilight ushered in a long evening in which many thoughts had time to take root and unfold themselves. In those driving north-east rains which tried the village houses so, when the maids stood ready with mop and pail in front entries to keep the deluge out, I sat behind my door in my little house, which was all entry, and thoroughly enjoyed its protection. In one heavy thunder shower the lightning struck a large pitch-pine across the pond, making a very conspicuous and perfectly regular spiral groove from top to bottom, an inch or more deep, and four or five inches wide, as you would groove a walking-stick, going round the tree three times, and descending faster as the trunk grew longer. But it did not appear to have suffered essentially. I passed it again the other day, and was struck with awe on looking up and beholding that mark,

now more distinct than ever, where a terrific and resistless bolt came down out of the harmless sky eight years ago; and I felt that we had not learned much since the days of Tullus Hostilius. The woodpeckers have at length begun to bore it on one side.

Men frequently say to me, "I should think you would feel lonesome down there, and want to be nearer to folks, rainy and snowy days and nights especially." I am tempted to reply to such, — This whole earth which we inhabit is but a point in space. How far apart, think you, dwell the two most distant inhabitants of yonder star, the breadth of whose disk cannot be appreciated by our instruments? Why should I feel lonely? is not our planet in the Milky Way? This which you put seems to me not to be the most important question. What sort of space is that which separates a man from his fellows and makes him solitary?

I have found that no exertion of the legs can bring two minds much nearer to one another. Why will we always be trading and never conclude a bargain? There goes a rumor that the earth is inhabited, — but not yet have we seen a footprint on the shore. The hunter sometimes discovers pottery and the mounds of former inhabitants. Can we imagine Man more startlingly solitary? What if there should be borne on the wind, mingling with the sounds of the groves, the voice of a fellow? How very remotely allied to us are our brothers and sisters! Only small accidents remind us of them. I can go out in the morning, — in deep thought, travelling till even-

ing, — till I come round to my door again, — and no one shall cross my path.

We have wonderfully little faith; it seems so rare and dim, as if it were imparted from very far. The world has been constantly expecting a divine Man; it has never been backward to hail the least worthiness in human shape, — it is the great miracle which all the ages expect. They have not so steadily waited for anything else. But the prophecy is no truer than of a divine race of men. When the faith of men is equal to this, then will it be begotten.

Has Man lived so long, not to have learned the whole order of Nature? Is it only the comets whose periods we have not wholly learned? What periods may Love and Justice have? what larger years revolve in the steady order of Nature, — quite distancing the weak memory of mankind, whose new Spring may be even now at hand! Can our fathers tell us? can our forefathers, what we may expect in the future?

What do we want most to dwell near to? Not to many men, surely, the depot, the post-office, the bar-room, the meeting-house, the school-house, the grocery, Beacon Hill, or the Five Points, where men most congregate, but to the perennial source of our life, whence in all our experience we have found that to issue, as the willow stands near the water and sends out its roots in that direction. This will vary with different natures, but this is the place where a wise man will dig his cellar. Yet most men are not so wise as a tree; or rather, are like those trees which being

badly located, make only wood and leaves and bear no fruit.

I one evening overtook one of my townsmen, who has accumulated what is called "a handsome property," — though I never got a *fair* view of it, — on the Walden road, driving a pair of cattle to market, who inquired of me how I could bring my mind to give up so many of the comforts of life. I answered that I was very sure I liked it passably well; I was not joking. And so I went home to my bed, and left him to pick his way through the darkness and the mud to Brighton, — or Bright-town, — some fifteen miles distant, which place he would reach some time in the morning.

Any prospect of awakening or coming to life to a dead man makes indifferent all times and places. The place where that may occur is always the same, and indescribably pleasant to all our senses. For the most part we allow only outlying and transient circumstances to make our occasions. They are, in fact, the cause of our distraction. Nearest to all things is that power which fashions their being. *Next* to us the grandest laws are continually being executed. *Next* to us is not the workman whom we have hired, with whom we love so well to talk, but the workman whose work we are.

"How vast and profound is the influence of the subtile powers of Heaven and of Earth!"

"We seek to perceive them, and we do not see them; we seek to hear them, and we do not hear them; identified with the substance of things, they cannot be separated from them."

"They cause that in all the universe men purify and sanctify their hearts, and clothe themselves in their holiday garments to offer sacrifices and oblations to their ancestors. It is an ocean of subtile intelligences. They are everywhere, above us, on our left, on our right; they environ us on all sides."

We are the subjects of an experiment which is not a little interesting to me. Can we not do without the society of our gossips a little while under these circumstances — have our own thoughts to cheer us? If you want society, mind your business. Confucius says, truly, "Virtue does not remain as an abandoned orphan; it must of necessity have neighbors."

With thinking we may be beside ourselves in a sane sense. By a conscious effort of the mind we can stand aloof from actions and their consequences; and all things, good and bad, go by us like a torrent. We are not wholly involved in Nature. I may be either the driftwood in the stream, or Indra in the sky looking down on it. I *may* be affected by a theatrical exhibition; on the other hand, I *may not* be affected by an actual event which appears to concern me much more. I only know myself as a human entity; the scene, so to speak, of thoughts and affections; and am sensible of a certain doubleness by which I can stand as remote from myself as from another. This doubleness may easily make us poor neighbors and friends sometimes.

However intense my experience, I am conscious of the presence and criticism of a part of me, which, as it were, is not a part of me, but

spectator, sharing no experience, but taking note of it; and that is no more I than it is you. When the play, it may be the tragedy, of life is over, the spectator goes his way. It was a kind of fiction, a work of the imagination only, so far as he was concerned.

> Must we still eat
> The bread we have spurned?
> Must we re-kindle
> The faggots we 've burned?

I find it wholesome to be alone the greater part of the time. To be in company, even with the best, is soon wearisome and dissipating. I love to be alone. I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude. We are for the most part more lonely when we go abroad among men than when we stay in our chambers. A man thinking or working is always alone, let him be where he will. Solitude is not measured by the miles of space that intervene between a man and his fellows. The really diligent student in one of the crowded hives of Cambridge College is as solitary as a dervish in the desert. The farmer can work alone in the field or the woods all day, hoeing or chopping, and not feel lonesome, because he is employed; but when he comes home at night he cannot sit down in a room alone, at the mercy of his thoughts, but must be where he can " see the folks," and recreate, and, as he thinks, remunerate himself for his day's solitude; and hence he wonders how the student can sit alone in the house all night and most of the day without ennui and " the blues; " but he does not

realize that the student, though in the house, is still at work in *his* field, and chopping in *his* woods, as the farmer in his, and in turn seeks the same recreation and society that the latter does, though it may be a more condensed form of it.

Society is commonly too cheap. We meet at very short intervals, not having had time to acquire any new value for each other. We meet at meals three times a day, and give each other a new taste of that old musty cheese that we are. We have had to agree on a certain set of rules, called etiquette and politeness, to make this frequent meeting tolerable, and that we need not come to open war. We meet at the post-office, and at the sociable, and about the fireside every night; we live thick and are in each other's way, and stumble over one another, and I think that we thus lose some respect for one another. Certainly less frequency would suffice for all important and hearty communications. Consider the girls in a factory — never alone, hardly in their dreams. It would be better if there were but one inhabitant to a square mile, as where I live. The value of a man is not in his skin, that we should touch him.

I have heard of a man lost in the woods and dying of famine and exhaustion at the foot of a tree, whose loneliness was relieved by the grotesque visions with which, owing to bodily weakness, his diseased imagination surrounded him, and which he believed to be real. So also, owing to bodily and mental health and strength, we may be continually cheered by a like but more normal

and natural society, and come to know that we are never alone.

I have a great deal of company in my house; especially in the morning, when nobody calls. Let me suggest a few comparisons, that some one may convey an idea of my situation. I am no more lonely than the loon in the pond that laughs so loud, or than Walden Pond itself. What company has that lonely lake, I pray? And yet it has not the blue devils, but the blue angels in it, in the azure tint of its waters. The sun is alone, except in thick weather, when there sometimes appear to be two, but one is a mock sun. God is alone,— but the devil, he is far from being alone; he sees a great deal of company; he is legion.

I am no more lonely than a single mullein or dandelion in a pasture, or a bean-leaf, or sorrel, or a horse-fly, or a humble-bee. I am no more lonely than the Mill Brook, or a weathercock, or the north star, or the south wind, or an April shower, or a January thaw, or the first spider in a new house.

I have occasional visits in the long winter evenings, when the snow falls fast and the wind howls in the wood, from an old settler and original proprietor, who is reported to have dug Walden Pond, and stoned it, and fringed it with pine woods; who tells me stories of old time and of new eternity; and between us we manage to pass a cheerful evening with social mirth and pleasant views of things, even without apples or cider, — a most wise and humorous friend, whom I love much, who keeps himself more secret than

ever did Goffe or Whalley; and though he is thought to be dead, none can show where he is buried.

An elderly dame, too, dwells in my neighborhood, invisible to most persons, in whose odorous herb garden I love to stroll sometimes, gathering simples and listening to her fables; for she has a genius of unequalled fertility, and her memory runs back farther than mythology, and she can tell me the original of every fable and on what fact every one is founded, for the incidents occurred when she was young. A ruddy and lusty old dame, who delights in all weathers and seasons, and is likely to outlive all her children yet.

What young experimentalists we are! There is not one here who has lived even a whole human life, and can say what that is. Yet, as I stand today over the insect crawling amid the needles of the pine, and endeavoring to hide himself from my sight, — and think what cheering information I could possibly give him concerning his lower fate and environments, — I am led to ask if there may not be some Infinite Intelligence standing over me, the human insect, and prepared to impart to me knowledge as startling. Why will my insect cherish these humble thoughts, and hide its head under leaves, and avoid its benefactor? I would cheer his puny race with full news of great events which concern it. Might I not contribute something to strengthen his faith, out of my superior intelligence, and make him bless this afternoon that led me to the wood? The race, — the generation itself, — may be divine, may be an inspired one,

— for the race of imperfect mortals dies out.[1] There are several varieties of men, as of plants; you have not described a man when you have told his race.

The indescribable innocence and beneficence of Nature — of sun, and wind, and rain, of summer and winter — such health, such cheer, they afford forever! and such sympathy have they ever with our race, that all Nature would be affected, and the sun's brightness fade, and the winds would sigh humanely, and the clouds rain tears, and the woods shed their leaves and put on mourning in midsummer, if any man should ever for a just cause grieve. Shall I not have intelligence with the earth? Am I not partly leaves and vegetable mould myself? God is my father and my friend; men are my brothers, and Nature is my mother and my sister.

What is the pill which will keep us well, serene, contented? Not my or thy great-grandfather's, but our great-grandmother Nature's universal, vegetable, botanic medicines, by which she has kept herself young always, outlived so many old Parrs in her day, and fed her health with their decaying fatness. For my panacea, instead of

[1] The tender thoughtful seer who wrote thus could not have been serious in what he wrote against philanthropists; he was not only one himself, but a philozoist, friendly to all life in animal or vegetable. Moncure Conway compared him, long ago, to St. Francis of Assisi, and in passages like the above we see the inward likeness, — far enough apart as their ways of life were. When Ellery Channing styled him "the Poet-Naturalist" he also pointed out the essential vein of poesy running through his versions of Natural History. — F. B. S.

one of those quack vials of a mixture dipped from Acheron and the Dead Sea, which come out of those long shallow black-schooner looking wagons which we sometimes see made to carry bottles, let me have a draught of undiluted morning air. Morning air! If men will not drink of this at the fountain-head of the day, why, then, we must even bottle up some and sell it in the shops, for the benefit of those who have lost their subscription ticket to morning time in this world. But remember, it will not keep quite till noonday even in the coolest cellar, but drive out the stopples long ere that and follow westward the steps of Aurora.

I am no worshipper of Hygeia, who was the daughter of that old herb-doctor Æsculapius, and who is represented on monuments "holding a serpent in one hand, and in the other a cup out of which the serpent sometimes drank;" but rather of Hebe, — cup-bearer to Jupiter, who was the daughter of Juno and the wild lettuce, and who "had the power of restoring gods and men to the vigor of youth." She was probably the only thoroughly sound-conditioned, healthy, and robust young lady that ever walked this globe, and wherever she came it was spring.

CHAPTER VI — VISITORS

I THINK that I love society as much as most, and am ready enough to fasten myself like a blood-sucker for the time to any full-blooded man that comes in my way. I am naturally no hermit, but might possibly sit out the sturdiest frequenter of the bar-room, if my business called me in that direction.

I had three chairs in my house; one for solitude, two for friendship, three for society. When visitors came in larger and unexpected numbers there was but the third chair for them all, but they generally economized the room by standing up. It is surprising how many great men and women a small house will contain. I have had twenty-five or thirty souls, with their bodies, at once under my roof, and yet we often parted without being aware that we had come very near to one another. Many of our houses, both public and private, with their almost innumerable apartments, their huge halls and their cellars for the storage of wines and other munitions of peace, appear to me extravagantly large for their inhabitants. They are so vast and magnificent that the latter seem to be only vermin which infest them. I am frequently astonished when the herald blows his summons before some Tremont, or Astor, or Middlesex House, to see come creeping

out over the piazza for all inhabitants a ridiculous mouse, which soon again slinks into some hole in the pavement.

One inconvenience I sometimes experienced in so small a house, the difficulty of getting to a sufficient distance from my guest when we began to utter the big thoughts in big words. You want room for your thoughts to get into sailing trim, and run a course or two before they make their port. The bullet of your thought must have overcome its lateral and ricochet motion, and fallen into its last and steady course, before it reaches the ear of the hearer, else it may plough out again through the side of his head. Also, our sentences wanted room to unfold and form their columns in the interval. Individuals, like nations, must have suitable broad and natural boundaries, even a considerable neutral ground, though it be disputed territory, between them. I have found it a singular luxury to talk across the pond to a companion on the opposite side; and did you ever talk to the sexton across an empty meeting-house, after the audience were gone out? It is easy to be eloquent at such a time and in such a place. In my house we were so near that we could not begin to hear — we could not speak low enough to be heard; as when you throw two stones into calm water so near that they break each other's undulations. If we are merely loquacious and loud talkers, then indeed we can afford to stand very near together, cheek by jowl, and shoulder to shoulder, and feel each other's breath; but if we speak reservedly and thoughtfully, we want to be farther apart, that all animal heat and

moisture may have a chance to evaporate. If we would enjoy the most intimate society with that in each of us which is without, and above being spoken to, we must not only be silent, but commonly so far apart bodily that we cannot possibly hear each other's voice in any case; though this is what men commonly call Solitude. Referred to this standard, speech is for the convenience of those who are hard of hearing; but there are many fine things which we cannot say if we have to shout. As the conversation began to assume a loftier and grander tone, we gradually shoved our chairs farther apart till they touched the wall in opposite corners, and then sometimes there was not room enough. If you do not want fire to smoke, you must not stand too near it, so as to divert the current of the chimney's inspiration.

My "best" room, however, my withdrawing room, always ready for company, on whose carpet the sun rarely fell, — for its green blinds were kept always closed, — was the pine wood behind my house. Thither in summer days, when distinguished guests came, I took them, and Nature was my domestic that swept the floor and dusted the furniture and kept the things in order.

If one guest came to my house he sometimes partook of my frugal meal, and it was no interruption to conversation to be stirring a hasty-pudding, or watching the rising and maturing of a loaf of bread in the ashes, in the meanwhile. But if twenty came and sat in my house there was nothing said about dinner, though there might be bread enough for two, more than if eating were a forsaken habit; but we naturally practised ab-

stinence. To copy an old joke, we were hungry enough for one, but not enough for twenty, and this was never felt to be an offence against hospitality, but the most proper and considerate course.

The waste and decay of physical life, which so often needs repair, seemed miraculously retarded in such a case, and the vital vigor stood its ground. I could entertain thus a thousand as well as twenty; and if any ever went away disappointed or hungry from my house when they found me at home, they may depend upon it that I sympathized with them at least. So easy is it, though many housekeepers doubt it, to establish new and better customs in the place of the old. You need not rest your reputation on the dinners you give. For my own part, I was never so effectually deterred from frequenting a man's house, by any kind of Cerberus whatever, as by the parade one made about dining me, which I took to be a very polite and round-about hint never to trouble him so again. I think I shall never revisit those scenes. I should be proud to have for the motto of my cabin those lines of Spenser which one of my visitors inscribed on a yellow walnut leaf for a card and which may make the motto for my house: —

> Arrived there, the little house they fill,
> Ne looke for entertainement where none was;
> Rest is their feast, and all thinges at their will:
> The noblest mind the best contentment has.

When Winslow, afterward governor of the Plymouth Colony, went with a companion on a

visit of ceremony to Massasoit on foot through the woods, and arrived tired and hungry at his lodge, they were well received by the king, but nothing was said about eating that day. When the night arrived, to quote their own words — "He laid us on the bed with himself and his wife, they at the one end and we at the other, it being only plank, laid a foot from the ground, and a thin mat upon them. Two more of his chief men, for want of room, pressed by and upon us; so that we were worse weary of our lodging than of our journey."

At one o'clock the next day Massasoit "brought two fishes that he had shot," about thrice as big as a bream; "these being boiled, there were at least forty looked for a share in them. The most ate of them. This meal only we had in two nights and a day; and had not one of us bought a partridge, we had taken our journey fasting." Fearing that they should be light-headed for want of food and also sleep, owing to "the savages' barbarous singing (for they used to sing themselves asleep)," and that they might get home while they had strength to travel, they departed. As for lodging, it must be confessed that the whites were but poorly entertained, though what they found an inconvenience was no doubt intended for an honor; but as far as eating was concerned, I do not see how the Indians could have done better. This was a time of fasting with them. At another time when Winslow visited them he got as much to eat as he had got little before. They had nothing to eat themselves, and they were wiser than to think

that apologies could supply the place of food to their guests; so they drew their belts tighter and said nothing about it.

As for men, they will hardly fail one anywhere. I had more visitors while I lived in the woods than at any other period of my life; I mean that I had some. I met several there under more favorable circumstances than I could anywhere else. But fewer came to see me on trivial business. In this respect, my company was winnowed by my mere distance from town. I had withdrawn so far within the great ocean of solitude, into which the rivers of society empty, that for the most part, so far as my needs were concerned, only the finest sediment was deposited around me. Beside, there were wafted to me evidences of unexplored and uncultivated continents on the other side.

Who should come to my lodge this morning but a true Homeric or Paphlagonian man,[1] — he had so suitable and poetic a name that I am sorry I cannot print it here, — a Canadian, a woodchopper and post-maker, who can hole fifty posts in a day, who made his last supper on a woodchuck which his dog caught. He, too, has heard of Homer, and, "if it were not for books," would "not know what to do rainy days," though perhaps he has not read one wholly through for many rainy seasons. Some priest who could pronounce the Greek itself taught him to read his verse in the Testament in his native parish far away; and now I must translate to him,

[1] See footnote (*a*) at end of chapter, p. 207.

while he holds the book, Achilles' reproof to Patroclus for his sad countenance. "Why are you in tears, Patroclus, like a young girl?"

"Or have you alone heard some news from Phthia?
They say that Menœtius lives yet, son of Actor,
And Peleus lives, son of Æacus, among the Myrmidons,
Either of whom having died, we should greatly grieve."

He says, "That 's good." He has a great bundle of white-oak bark under his arm for a sick man, gathered this Sunday morning. "I suppose there 's no harm in going after such a thing today," says he. To him Homer was a great writer, though what his writing was about under the sun he did not know. I have since seen him many times. A more simple and natural man it would be hard to find. Vice and disease, which cast such a sombre moral hue over the world, seemed to have hardly any existence for him. He was about twenty-eight years old, and had left Canada and his father's house a dozen years before to work in the States, and earn money to buy a farm with at last, perhaps in his native country. He was cast in the coarsest mould, a stout but sluggish body, yet gracefully carried, with a thick sunburnt neck, dark bushy hair, and dull, sleepy blue eyes, which were occasionally lit up with expression; breathed hard and smelled of his work. He wore a flat gray cloth cap, a dingy wool-colored greatcoat, and cowhide boots. He was a great consumer of meat, usually carrying his dinner to his work a couple of miles past my house — for he chopped all summer — in a tin pail; cold meats, often cold woodchucks, and

coffee in a stone bottle which dangled by a string from his belt; and sometimes he offered me a drink. He came along early, crossing my bean-field, though without anxiety or haste to get to his work, such as Yankees exhibit. He was n't a-going to hurt himself. He did n't care if he only earned his board. Frequently he would leave his dinner in the bushes, when his dog had caught a woodchuck by the way, and go back a mile and a half to dress it and leave it in the cellar of the house where he boarded, after deliberating first for half an hour whether he could not sink it in the pond safely till nightfall, — loving to dwell long upon these themes. He would say, as he went by in the morning, " How thick the pigeons are! If working every day were not my trade, I could get all the meat I should want by hunting, — pigeons, woodchucks, rabbits, partridges, — by gosh! I could get all I should want for a week in one day."

He was a skilful chopper, and indulged in some flourishes and ornaments in his art. He cut his trees level and close to the ground, that the sprouts which came up afterward might be more vigorous and a sled might slide over the stumps; and instead of leaving a whole tree to support his corded wood, he would pare it away to a slender stake or splinter which you could break off with your hand at last.

He interested me because he was so quiet and solitary and so happy withal; a well of good humor and contentment which overflowed at his eyes. His mirth was without alloy. Sometimes I saw him at his work in the woods, felling trees,

and he would greet me with a laugh of inexpressible satisfaction, and a salutation in Canadian French, though he spoke English as well; and when I asked him in which he thought now, or if he spoke aloud to himself which language he used — "You know we sometimes talk to ourselves," said I — "Yes, sometimes," he said it was in English. When I approached him he would suspend his work, and with half-suppressed mirth lie along the trunk of a pine which he had felled, and, peeling off the inner bark, roll it up into a ball and chew it, while he laughed and talked. Such an exuberance of animal spirits he had that he sometimes tumbled down and rolled on the ground with laughter at anything which made him think and tickled him.

Looking round upon the trees he would exclaim — "By George! I can enjoy myself well enough here chopping; I want no better sport." Sometimes, when at leisure, he amused himself all day in the woods with a pocket pistol, firing salutes to himself at regular intervals as he walked, and occasionally he would steal up behind my house and fire a stout charge, and laugh loudly at my surprise or his own trick. He loved also to frighten his dog when alone in the woods by pointing his pistol at him and firing powder only. In the winter he had a fire by which at noon he warmed his coffee in a kettle; and as he sat on a log to eat his dinner, the chickadees would sometimes come round and alight on his arm and peck at the potato in his fingers; and he said that he "liked to have the little *fellers* about" him.

In him the animal man chiefly was developed. In physical endurance and contentment he was cousin to the pine and the rock. I asked him once if he was not sometimes tired at night, after working all day; and he answered, with a sincere and serious look, "Gor-*rap*-it, I never was tired in my life." It sounded like the triumph of the physical man; but the intellectual and what is called spiritual man in him were slumbering as in an infant. He had been instructed only in that innocent and ineffectual way in which the Catholic priests teach the aborigines, by which the pupil is never educated to the degree of consciousness, but only to the degree of trust and reverence, and a child is not made a man, but kept a child.

When Nature made him, she gave him a strong body and contentment for his portion, and propped him on every side with reverence and reliance, that he might live out his threescore years and ten a child. He was so genuine and unsophisticated that no introduction would serve to introduce him, more than if you introduced a woodchuck to your neighbor. He had got to find him out as you did. He would not play any part. Like all children he amused himself chiefly alone, — not in society. Men paid him wages for work, and so helped to feed and clothe him; but he never exchanged opinions with them. He was so simply and naturally humble — if he can be called humble who never aspires — that humility was no distinct quality in him, nor could he conceive of it. Wiser men were demigods to him. If you told him that such a one was coming, he

did as if he thought that anything so grand would expect nothing of himself, but take all the responsibility on itself, and let him be forgotten still.

He never heard the sound of praise. He particularly reverenced the writer and the preacher. Their performances were miracles. When I told him that I wrote considerably, he thought for a long time that it was merely the handwriting which I meant, for he could write a remarkably good hand himself. I sometimes found the name of his native parish handsomely written in the snow by the highway, with the proper French accent, and knew that he had passed. I asked him if he ever wished to write his thoughts. He said that he had read and written letters for those who could not, but he never tried to write thoughts, — no, he could not, he could not tell what to put first, it would kill him, and then there was spelling to be attended to at the same time!

I heard that a distinguished wise man and reformer asked him if he did not want the world to be changed; but he answered with a chuckle of surprise in his Canadian accent, not knowing that the question had ever been entertained before, " No, I like it well enough." It would have suggested many things to a philosopher to have dealings with him. To a stranger he appeared to know nothing of things in general; yet I sometimes saw in him a man whom I had not seen before, and I did not know whether he was as wise as Shakespeare or as simply ignorant as a child, whether to suspect him of a fine poetic consciousness or of stupidity. A townsman told me

that when he met him sauntering through the village in his small close-fitting cap, and whistling to himself, he reminded him of a prince in disguise.

His only books were an almanac and an arithmetic, in which last he was considerably expert. The former was a sort of cyclopædia to him, which he supposed to contain an abstract of human knowledge, as indeed it does to a considerable extent. I loved to sound him on the various reforms of the day, and he never failed to look at them in the most simple and practical light. He had never heard of such things before.

Could he do without factories? I asked. He had worn the home-made Vermont gray, he said, and that was good. Could he dispense with tea and coffee? Did this country afford any beverage beside water? He had soaked hemlock leaves in water and drank it, and thought that was better than water in warm weather. When I asked him if he could do without money, he showed the convenience of money in such a way as to suggest and coincide with the most philosophical accounts of the origin of this institution, and the very derivation of the word *pecunia*.

If an ox were his property, and he wished to get needles and thread at the store, he thought it would be inconvenient and impossible soon to go on mortgaging some portion of the creature each time to that amount. He could defend many institutions better than any philosopher, because, in describing them as they concerned him, he gave the true reason for their prevalence, and speculation had not suggested to him any other.

At another time, hearing Plato's definition of a man — a biped without feathers — and that one exhibited a cock plucked and called it Plato's man, he thought it an important difference that the *knees* bent the wrong way. He would sometimes exclaim, "How I love to talk! By George, I could talk all day!" I asked him once, when I had not seen him for many months, if he had got a new idea this summer. "Good Lord!" said he, "a man that has to work as I do, if he does not forget the ideas he has had, he will do well. Maybe the man you hoe with is inclined to race; then, by gorry, your mind must be there; you think of weeds."

He would sometimes ask me first on such occasions, if I had made any improvement. One winter day I asked him if he was always satisfied with himself, wishing to suggest a substitute within him for the priest without, and some higher motive for living. "Satisfied!" said he, "some men are satisfied with one thing, and some with another. One man, perhaps, if he has got enough, will be satisfied to sit all day with his back to the fire and his belly to the table, by George!" Yet I never, by any manœuvring, could get him to take the spiritual view of things; the highest that he appeared to conceive of was a simple expediency, such as you might expect an animal to appreciate; and this, practically, is true of most men. If I suggested any improvement in his mode of life, he merely answered, without expressing any regret, that it was too late. Yet he thoroughly believed in honesty and the like virtues.

There was a certain positive originality, however slight, to be detected in him, and I occasionally observed that he was thinking for himself and expressing his own opinion, however crude and indistinct, — a phenomenon so rare that I would any day walk ten miles to observe it, and it amounted to the re-origination of many of the institutions of society. Though he hesitated, and perhaps failed to express himself distinctly, he always had a presentable thought behind.

Yet his thinking was so primitive and immersed in his animal life, that, though more promising than a merely learned man's, it rarely ripened to anything which can be reported. He suggested that there might be men of genius in the lowest grades of life, however permanently humble and illiterate, who take their own view always, or do not pretend to see at all; who are as bottomless even as Walden Pond was thought to be, though they may be dark and muddy.

Many a traveller came out of his way to see me, and the inside of my house, and, as an excuse for calling, asked for a glass of water. I generally told them that I drank out of the Pond, and pointed thither, offering to lend them a dipper. One Sunday two young women, strangers, borrowed my dipper; but I never saw them nor the dipper again. They thirsted not for water, but threw the dipper into the lake, perchance. What the lake to them but liquid fire and brimstone! They will never know peace until they have returned the dipper. In all worlds this is decreed.

Far off as I lived, I was not exempted from that annual visitation which occurs about the first of April, when everybody is on the move; and I had my share of good luck, though there were some curious specimens among my visitors.

Half-witted men from the almshouse and elsewhere came to see me; but I endeavored to make them exercise all the wit they had, and make their confessions to me; in such cases making wit the theme of our conversation; and so was compensated. Indeed, I found some of them to be wiser than the so-called *overseers* of the poor and selectmen of the town, and thought it was time that the tables were turned. With respect to wit, I learned that there was not much difference between the half and the whole.

One day, in particular, an inoffensive, simple-minded pauper, whom with others I had often seen used as fencing stuff, standing or sitting on a bushel in the fields to keep cattle and himself from straying, visited me, and expressed a wish to live as I did. He told me, with the utmost simplicity and truth, quite superior, or rather *inferior*, to anything that is called humility, that he was "deficient in intellect." These were his words. The Lord had made him so, yet he supposed the Lord cared as much for him as for another. "I have always been so," said he, "from my childhood; I never had much mind; I was not like other children; I am weak in the head. It was the Lord's will, I suppose." And there he was to prove the truth of his words. He was a metaphysical puzzle to me. I have rarely met a fellow-man on such promising ground — it was

so simple and sincere, and so true, all that he said.

And, true enough, in proportion as he appeared to humble himself was he exalted. I did not know at first but it was the result of a wise policy. It seemed that from such a basis of truth and frankness as the poor weak-headed pauper had laid, our intercourse might go forward to something better than the intercourse of sages.

I had some guests from those not reckoned commonly among the town's poor, but who should be — who are among the world's poor, at any rate — guests who appeal, not to your hospitality, but to your *hospitalality;* who earnestly wish to be helped, and preface their appeal with the information that they are resolved, for one thing, never to help themselves. I require of a visitor that he be not actually starving, though he may have the very best appetite in the world, and however he got it, must not enquire how he came by it. Objects of charity are not guests. Men who did not know when their visit had terminated, though I went about my business again, and regarded myself as alone, answering them from greater and greater remoteness, —

> I 'm contented you should stay
> For ever and aye
> If you can take yourself away
> Any day.

Men of almost every degree of wit called on me in the migrating season. Some who had more wits than they knew what to do with — runaway

slaves, with plantation manners, who listened from time to time, like the fox in the fable, as if they heard the hounds a-baying on their track, and looked at me beseechingly, as much as to say —

"O Christian, will you send me back?"

one real runaway slave, among the rest, whom I helped to forward toward the north-star. Men of one idea, like a hen with one chicken, and that a duckling; men of a thousand ideas, and unkempt heads, like those hens which are made to take charge of a hundred chickens, all in pursuit of one bug, a score of them lost in every morning's dew, — and become frizzled and mangy in consequence; men of ideas instead of legs, a sort of intellectual centipede that made you crawl all over. One man proposed a book in which visitors should write their names, as at the White Mountains; said he would be at the expense of it! As if it were of any significance for a man who had failed to make any impression on you to leave his *name!* — No, I kept a book; — it needed only a small one — to put their *fames* in, — *I* was at the expense of it.

I could not but notice some of the peculiarities of my visitors. Girls and boys and young women generally seemed glad to be in the woods. They looked in the pond and at the flowers, and improved their time. Men of business, even farmers, thought only of solitude and employment, and of the great distance at which I dwelt from something or other; and though they said that they loved a ramble in the woods occasionally, it was obvious that they did not. Restless

committed men, whose time was all taken up in getting a living or keeping it; ministers who spoke of God as if they enjoyed a monopoly of the subject, who could not bear all kinds of opinions; doctors, lawyers, conscientious preachers, uneasy housekeepers who pried into my cupboard and bed when I was out — how came Mrs. —— to know that my sheets were not as clean as hers? — young men who had ceased to be young, and had concluded that it was safest to follow the beaten track of the professions — all these generally said that it was not possible to do so much good in my position. Ay! there was the rub. The old and infirm and the timid, of whatever age or sex, thought most of sickness, and sudden accident, and death; to them life seemed full of danger anywhere — what danger is there if you don't think of any? — and they thought that a prudent man would carefully select the safest position, where Dr. B. might be on hand at a moment's warning. To them the village was literally a *com-munity*, a league for mutual defence, and you would suppose that they would not go a-huckleberrying without a medicine chest. The amount of it is, if a man is alive, there is always *danger* that he may die, though the danger must be allowed to be less in proportion as he is dead-and-alive to begin with. A man sits as many risks as he runs. Finally, there were the self-styled reformers, the greatest bores of all, who thought that I was forever singing —

This is the house that I built;
This is the man that lives in the house that I built;

but they did not know that the third line was —

> These are the folks that worry the man
> That lives in the house that I built.

I did not fear the hen-harriers, for I kept no chickens, but I feared the men-harriers rather.

I had more cheering visitors than the last. Children come a-berrying, railroad men taking a Sunday morning walk in clean shirts, fishermen and hunters, — fishers and hunters of men too, — poets and philosophers; in short, all honest pilgrims, who came out to the woods for freedom's sake, and really left the village behind, I was ready to greet with, — "Welcome, Englishmen! welcome, Englishmen!" for I had had communication with that race.[1]

[1] Among the many visitors to Thoreau in his pine wood, he counted also some of the birds, and thus expressed himself about them after closing his interesting account of Therien, the woodcutter: — "In due time in the spring I heard the martins twittering over my clearing, though it had not appeared that the town contained so many that it could afford any to me. I fancied they were rather of the ancient stock that dwelt in Walden trees before the white man came, than the modern village race that live in boxes. Let a man live in any part of the globe and he will hear the same simple spring sounds to cheer him along the while; and the Orinoco and the Mississippi birds of the same genus migrate everywhere. The Romans greeted the swallow. Everywhere the frog and the turtle greet the season. The Temperate and Frigid salute the Torrid zone again; and birds fly, and plants and winds blow to correct this oscillation of the poles and preserve the equilibrium of Nature." — F. B. S.

(*a*) In the MS. at hand, Thoreau wrote, — "Aleck Therien, he calls himself — (Terrien, — Alexander the Farmer)." This was the Canadian wood-chopper already mentioned. His name was well known to the Concord readers of Thoreau, but it was not deemed proper to introduce him by name in a printed book. He outlived Thoreau, but is long since dead. Other visitors will be named as their descriptions occur; there were real persons, some of them well known to fame. But there were miscellaneous callers and strollers through the woods, of whom sometimes the MSS. give fuller accounts; as, for example: —

"Sometimes there would come half a dozen railroad repairers to my house at once, — healthy and sturdy working-men, descended from sound bodies, and still transmitting arms and legs and bowels downward (from remote days to more remote). Some of them had got a rude wisdom withal, and a courtesy which I love, thanks to their dear-bought experience. I met them so often in the woods that they began to look upon me at last as one of their kin. One, a handsome, young sailor-like man, says to me today — 'Sir, I like your notions; I think I shall live so myself. Only I should like a wilder country where there is more game. I have been among the Indians near Appalachicola. I have lived with them. I like your kind of life. Good day. I wish you success and happiness.' They came in troops on Sundays, in clean shirts, with washed hands and faces, and fresh twigs in their hands.

"Circumstances and employment affect but slowly the finer qualities of our nature. I observed in some of these men an inextinguishable and ineradicable refinement and delicacy of nature (older and of more worth than the sun and moon) which are commonly thought to adorn the drawing-rooms only. Sometimes I fancied a genuine magnanimity — more than Greek or Roman — equal to the least occasion of unexplored and uncontaminated descent. Greater traits methought I noticed in the short-

est intercourse than are recorded of any of the worthies, Epaminondas, Socrates or Cato. They had faces homely, hard and seamed like the rocks, but human and wise, embracing Copt and Mussulman, all races and nations, A Pacha or Sultan — Selim — Mustapha or Mahmoud in disguise.

"There is no more real rudeness in laborers or washerwomen than in gentlemen and ladies. Under some of the ancient and wrinkled, almost forlorn visages, as of an Indian chieftain, slumber the world-famous humanities of man. There is the race, and you need look no further. You can tell a nobleman's head among a thousand — though he may be shovelling gravel six rods off in the midst of a gang, with a cotton handkerchief tied about it. Such a one as is to succeed the worthies of history. Their humble occupation and that they take no airs upon themselves, are no disadvantage. Civilization makes bright only the superficial film of the eye. Most men are wrecked upon their consciences."

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